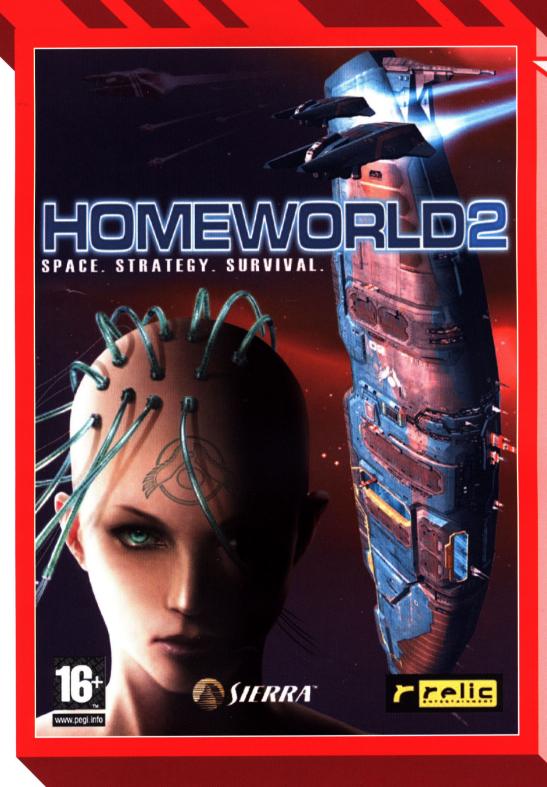


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COUNTER-STRIKE: CONDITION ZERO P62

Go, go, go! Massive 6-page world-exclusive review of the single-player version of the planet's favourite shooter

An Audience Divided



The future is online. How many times have you heard someone say this and how many times have they been off the mark? Don't get me wrong, I'm a huge fan of multiplayer gaming, but the predicted vision of the death of the single-player game, with every PC

player pitting his wits against real people across the world, hasn't happened. In fact, things have gone full circle this month as the world's biggest online shooter, *Counter-Strike*, is released as a single-player experience.

So what's gone wrong? Well, for starters: the costs (both for a broadband connection and subscriptions to multiplayer games), rampant cheating, abusive idiots, highly unstable launches and servers populated by 13-year-old crack-shots have kept the single-player experience as the only controlled environment on your PC. It's got to change and we're here to shake things up. PC ZONE was the first UK games mag to introduce a dedicated Online section back in August 2000, and now, over three years later, we're back. Our mission? To prove that, with the right games and the right servers, multiplayer gaming is still one of the most exhilarating experiences you can have on your PC.

As well as bringing you all the latest news, previews and reviews of the biggest commercial games, and our very own *PC ZONE* ladders (where you can play against other readers in a year-long tournament), we're going to pay extra special attention to clans and guilds, mod development teams and everyone else who works behind the scenes to keep the online scene alive. And what better game to kick off the new section with than *Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided*? Heralded as the game that was going to take online gaming into the mainstream, it's the title that, on paper at least, has everything going for it. It went live in the States at the end of June and we're the first mag in the UK to bring you a definitive review. Can it succeed where almost every other game has failed? Turn to page 104 and see for yourself.



Dave Woods Editor



STAR WARS GALAXIES: AN EMPIRE DIVIDED P104

The most anticipated MMOG ever has finally been unleashed... in the US. Can it match the hype? Find out in our in-depth 4-page review

TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS P68

The big guns of Lara Croft are back. But can she reignite the old flame after all this time? Our exclusive review reveals all

COVER DISKS P130



■ NINE PLAYABLE DEMOS INCLUDING...

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GIVE

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TINY COMPO Correctly answer this month's cover question and you could win some PC goodies. Send your entry on a postcard addressed to: Tiny Compo (130), PC ZONE, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4.JD. The first entry with the correct answer plucked out of the hat wins a mystery prize. The editor's decision is final. Closing Date: August 21, 2003. The winner of our July cover (130) is Lee Parkin from Colchester, who knew that Thief's main character is called Garrett. Well done.

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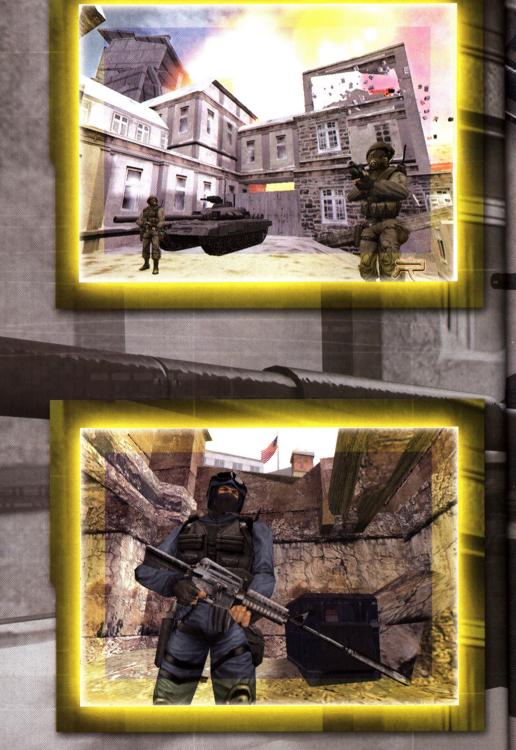
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The world's number 1 action game!



- Condition Zero is a new stand-alone title that introduces single player gaming to Counter-Strike.
- Includes 20 exclusive action-packed single player missions.
 - A high-definition pack that automatically upgrades Counter-Strike characters, models and explosions to stunning **NEW** visuals.
 - Introduces the official CS Bot for online and offline play.





Released 22nd August

COUNTERÁSTRIKE CODDITION ZERO





SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW

First shots of the stealth sequel! We go undercover to reveal essential game info

■ CRACK OP Anthony Holden

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Ubi Soft Montreal **PUBLISHER** Ubi Soft

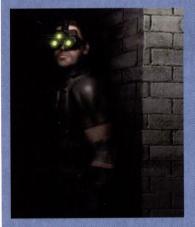
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE March 2004
WEBSITE www.splintercell.com

WEBSITE WWW.Spilittercent.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Sam Fisher is back in the follow-up to the greatest stealth game ever
- New online multiplayer support a first for stealth games!
- Full single-player campaign
- New weapons, moves and gadgets

"What's truly got us reeling is the bombshell announcement of online multiplayer gameplay"



THE FIRST EVER shots of the brand new *Splinter Cell* game, revealed just last month, have dropped through a skylight and landed silently on our desks, still smelling slightly of ozone and camo paint. Dubbed *Pandora Tomorrow*, the new game is set to offer improved graphics, new gadgets and new moves in a full new single-player

However, what's truly got us reeling is the bombshell announcement of online multiplayer gameplay – something never before attempted by a stealth-action franchise. We snuck up on producer Domitile Doat and demanded details.

campaign for elite sneaker Sam Fisher.

"Every fan of the original game knows that there is only one Sam Fisher. And he works alone. So you won't be playing Sam online. Instead the storyline for the new game features the NSA experimenting with a new type of infiltration operation that requires small 'shadow net' units. These are the people that the NSA calls upon when one man is just not enough." What Domitile is trying to say that this is no mere throwntogether deathmatch - we're talking full team-based co-op here. She also stressed that the multiplayer side of the game is still very much in progress, the team experimenting with various ideas to see what works best.

"Translating Splinter Cell into a highquality multiplayer game is obviously a huge challenge because the storyline and gameplay will need to be adjusted, yet we want to remain true to the original game. Therefore, the core elements of the single-player game will remain in the multiplayer modes. The light and shadows will still figure prominently into



It's curtains for you Sam Fisher.

the gameplay, and players can rely on their trusty split jumps and other moves, and will have a number of high-tech gadgets at their disposal. How exactly we will alter the mechanics of the game is not yet final."

Clearly, there's amazing potential here, and *PC ZONE* would dearly love to see a proper, stealthy multiplayer game where concealment, sound-detection, and laying traps take precedence over mindless fragging.

Ubi Soft also gave us some exciting hints of what we can expect from the single-player campaign. "The game will take us to new locations around the world," grinned Domitile. "There will be more maps that are open, as well as more daytime maps that feature civilians going about their daily lives. This will be

pretty challenging, as Sam must carry out his objectives without alerting the civilians to his presence."

Domitile also promised that any other enhancements made to the game, whether to the graphics or the feature set, will be a lot more than mere windowdressing. "Only the implementations that create a real benefit to the gameplay will be considered," she insisted. "Improved physics would add to the high levels of realism and believability, so it's probably safe to say that improved physics will be evident in the final product."

Of course, one thing we can say with confidence is that, as the follow-up to one of the finest third-person games of all time, in development by the same hit-making development team, *Pandora Tomorrow* is going to be brilliant.



We knew the train system was crowded, but has it really come to this?!



If you look very closely Sam Fisher can be spotted hiding in the air con.



Those who found the first game too linear could well be in for a treat, Ubi Soft insisting that your actions now have many possible consequences.

PAGODA Check it out. Sam's heading to a tropical paradise. Or a tropical slum at least... With terrorist tensions hotting up in the region, our money's on Indonesia

REALISM

"Even more realistic surroundings," is Ubi Soft's promise, and while it's the same basic graphics engine, we can expect more detail and bigger environments all round.

MOVIE-LIKE We've also been promised a "strongly cinematic feel",

whatever that means. At this stage we're thinking The Year Of Living Dangerously meets Deliverance.

FOLIAGE

The thick tropical vegetation should offer a new twist on stealthy concealment, with partial cover and camouflage the order of the day.

LIGHTING

The game's superb dynamic lighting system is to be even further improved, with more realistic softer edges on shadows.

Ubi Soft has promised us improved physics, which could well mean you can pick up this breeze block and twat someone with it! Or maybe not...

War in the Pacific

EXCLUSIVE! SCREENS OF MEDAL OF HONOR SEQUEL, PACIFIC ASSAULT

ARTIFICIALLY INTELLIGENT

■ ASSOCIATE EDITOR Jamie Sefton

If there's one thing that's really hit me this month (apart from the fact my beloved Leeds Utd are doomed to a decade of mediocrity) is that the AI in PC games is getting scarily good.

The first example of this was when we recently played Crytek's first-person shooter Far Cry. The game looks beautiful, but what's most impressive is the way enemies react to you, ducking when you fire, hiding in the undergrowth, flanking you and smoking you out with grenades. Crytek wants the single-player game to feel like a multiplayer match against other humans, and it seems they are very close to achieving it.

Secondly, we've been caning our exclusive cover game Counter-Strike: Condition Zero (page 62) in multiplayer with the new Al bots. It's fantastic. Editor Woods and myself had one particularly memorable LAN battle, backed up on each of our sides by four computer goons. The Al reacted just like a human player, camping on rescue points, holding position and backing you up in firefights, making it feel as if we were in a much larger multiplayer fragging session. Overall, it's the best offline multiplayer experience I've had. Along with the innovations in physics technology, these improvements in artificial intelligence are pushing gaming into uncharted territory, and the PC is again showing the way.

Anyhow, as for Bulletin this month, we have the world's first Medal Of Honor: Pacific Assault screens, as well as exclusive images from Battlefield Vietnam (page 13), space trader/combat sim X2: The Threat (page 15) and Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter (page 20). Enjoy.



MoH: Pacific Assault is the big sequel to Allied Assault.

THE NEXT Medal Of Honor game is due in just six short months, and takes the action from the bomb-scarred fields of Europe to the clammy jungles of the Pacific rim. PC ZONE has managed to prize the first ever screenshots of the game away from the California-based developers, giving us our first glimpse of the dense jungle terrain we'll be entangled in come January.

While at this stage of development there's not a great deal going on in terms of actual warfare, the shots clearly show a very different *Medal Of Honor* game emerging from the lush tropical jungles. Whether squatting in a bed of reeds on a riverbank or skirting an exposed jungle clearing, it's clear the environment is going to play a big part in the style of gameplay, with concealment and camouflage playing a much bigger role.

BUSH WHACKING

We caught up with Matt
Powers, senior producer on
the game, to get the inside line.
"One of the things we're working
on is cover. We've got what
we call partial visibility cover,
meaning if you're lurking in the
bushes you'll be harder to see
and enemy fire won't hit you
as often. Lighting will be an
important factor too, as well
as noise. We're also going
to use more squad hand
signals to indicate what's
happening."

However, Powers is also keen to stress that *Pacific Assault* is not about to turn into a stealth action game. Staying a bit quiet so as not to give away your squad's position is one thing, but this is certainly no jungle sneak 'em up. "We use spotlights and noise in certain levels, but this is not a sneaking game – it's still all about the action. There's a balance between using terrain, lighting and noise as gameplay elements, while not slowing the pacing down or making the player feel like they're not in the thick of the action enough."

Other big changes since
Allied Assault include new
weapons and vehicles,
such as jungle-clearing
flamethrower tanks, and
medics that will come to your
assistance when you're
wounded. But according to
Powers, the biggest

difference could be simply the amount of choice and freedom

you have in approaching each intense combat scenario.

VILLAGE PEOPLE

"We're trying to offer more choices to the player, different ways to complete the missions and secondary objectives. We've got one mission where you're in a village, and on one side you've got Japanese coming in with tanks, and infantry coming in on the other side. You have to take them all out, but how you





"I can see you!"

"We use spotlights and noise in certain levels, but this is not a sneaking game – it's still all about the action"

MATT POWERS SENIOR PRODUCER, EA

go about that – which order you do things in – is up to you, and that's going to affect what happens in the mission. We want to always offer you a variety of options. You're going to

you a variety of options. You're going to have a bunch of squadmates to consider, and you'll be able to carry wounded pals on your shoulder and heal them. We want to have it so you can replay each mission in a variety of ways."

Clearly, Pacific Assault is shaping up to be a very different proposition from either Allied Assault or the other big competitor for the war-shooty crown, Call Of Duty. Look out for a full hands-on preview of this huge sequel very soon.

- Publisher: Electronic Arts
- Developer: Electronic Arts
- ETA: January 2004
- Website: www.eagames.com/ official/moh



X2: THE THREAT Koch signs Egosoft's space-sim



KNIGHTS OF HONOR New RTS from sunflowers



EMULATION ZONE What's hot in Emu's world



PC ZONE CHARTS Latest cheats & release dates

SMOKIN' GUNS

ROLL UP FOR NOVALOGIC'S LATEST MULTIPLAYER SHOOTER JOINT OPERATIONS

A BRAND new multiplayer FPS franchise from Novalogic will be unleashed on PC later this year. Joint Operations is primarily a multiplayer online shooter for up to 64 players, set in a near-future Indonesia which is being torn apart by military factions. Using the company's Black Hawk engine, the game will apparently feature realistic jungle terrain, and will put you in charge of a host of land, sea and air vehicles.

In multiplayer you'll be able to join in coop missions, or fight against other players as either a member of the Joint Operations Force or an Indonesian Separatist, with each team having their own distinct weapons and special skills. However, there will be a smattering of single-player missions for gamers who want to brush up on their vehicle driving and weapon-blasting before taking on the online community. Watch this space for a hands-on report.

- Publisher: Novalogic
- Developer: Novalogic
- ETA: Q4 2003
- Website: www.novalogic.com





Along with Medal Of Honor, EA owns two of the biggest FPS franchises around.

Charlie don't surf

VIETNAM PROVIDES THE SETTING FOR THE SUCCESSOR TO BATTLEFIELD 1942



EVERYONE'S HEADING into the jungle at the moment. Men of Valor, Vietcong, the I'm A Celebrity... interactive game. And now the team behind the superb Battlefield 1942 are taking their online shooter forward thirty years with Battlefield Vietnam.

BFV promises enough refinements to the original to warrant a whole new wave of internet combatants taking up arms. In keeping with the setting, aerial units have been significantly upgraded, with

improved controls letting even novice pilots get behind the Huey choppers and napalm-spewing Phantom jets.

If the US isn't your bag, then you can also opt to fight for the NVA and Vietcong, the former boasting vastly improved defensive capabilities to represent their overwhelming numbers, the latter adept at setting booby traps.

The engine has been given an overhaul, with better graphics and audio upgrades that let you play blaring rock music as you swoop in from the skies. Battlefield Vietnam should be with us early in 2004, but the next release for the franchise will be the Secret Weapons Of WWII expansion pack for Battlefield 1942, out in the autumn.

- Publisher: Electronic Arts
- Developer: DICE
- ETA: Q1 2004
- Website: uk.ea.com

SHORTS

CHOPPER UNLEASHED

Starbreeze's promising medieval hack 'n' slash actionadventure

Enclave will finally be released in the UK this September. After German company Swing! went tits-up earlier this year, the game has been in limbo, but fortunately French company Atari has now picked up the pieces. Enclave is a graphicallyimpressive third-person romp with 12 playable characters, two interwoven campaigns, nlus tons of nasty weapons and special combos. PC ZONE had the exclusive demo on our coverdiscs back in issue 122

FESTIVAL OF GAMES



The Edinburah Festival is finally

embracing videogames with the announcement of the first Edinburgh International Games Festival from August 11-18. Two separate events will see a one-day games conference at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre, and an eight-day "Go Play Games" exhibition at the Royal Museum of Scotland, which includes PC games from NVIDIA's "The Way It's Meant To Be Played' campaign. Head over to www.eigf.co.uk for more info.



Capcom's action-RPG Chaos Legion is heading to PC at the end of this year. Chaos Legion is a third-person demonslasher, packed with melee battles and the ability to recruit different units for vanquishing the undead hordes. Capcom's recent PC releases have been wayoverdue conversions of Dino Crisis 2 and Breath Of Fire IV, but Chaos Legion will be released on PC mere months after the console version.

THE WINNER IS...

The winners of a year's supply of Xplosiv games are: Adam Girling, Nottingham; Sam Pearson, Buxted; Paul Field, Preston, Plus there are 10 copies of Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance sneaking towards: John Peckham, Liverpool; Chas Gilbert, Derby; Matthew Popplewell, Hayling Island; Joanne Lush, Portsmouth; P Seaman, Northampton; Susi Teall, Bournemouth: Daniel Beeks, Newton Abbot: K Jackson, Glasgow; Darren Bruno, London; Chris Cleave, Ashford. Congratulations.

X APPE

KOCH MEDIA SIGNS X2: THE THREAT -**RELEASE IN OCTOBER!**

EGOSOFT'S BEAUTIFUL space epic sequel X2: The Threat has been snapped up by publisher Koch Media for launch in October. As we said in our last preview in issue 128, X2: The Threat is looking as if it could eclipse Freelancer as the best successor to classic space trading/blasting sim Elite, with stunning graphics, impressive multiple ship battles and the ability to actually fly inside space stations.

"We're very excited and pleased that we're able to release our baby through such an excellent partner as Koch, as we had our share of problems last year when lots of publishers just disappeared," said Egosoft's managing director Bernd Lehahn.

X2: The Threat takes place in a realistically-structured universe that gives you the freedom to define your own role within it, including bounty hunter, trader, miner and smuggler. However, there is also a storyline with missions featuring "The Threat", an insidious and menacing race of aliens known as The Khaak, who are slowly plunging the galaxy into chaos.

"Since you last saw the game, we've improved lots of little details in X2, including the ability to support cinematic cutscenes with skinned characters," continued Lehahn. "Plus we now have limited range scanners on all player ships, which gives a whole lot more depth to the exploration part of X2 - effectively a "fog of war" similar to RTS games." We'll have the exclusive review and playable demo of X2: The Threat in PC ZONE very soon.

Publisher: Koch Media ETA: October 10

■ Developer: Egosoft

■ Website: www.x2thethreat.com

X2: The Threat features more than 60 different ships.



Hum The Blue Danube for an instant Kubrick homage.

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Shoot your own dramatic T-Rex footage.



"Here's a raptor. That sound you hear is me soiling my trousers."

SENSIBLE SOCCER GURU Jon Hare's unlikely new project combines gaming elements with the ability to film your own Jurassic wildlife documentary. Dinosaur Movie Maker puts you in the role of a David Attenborough wannabe, allowing you to shoot, dub, and cut a film using video editing techniques similar to the industrystandard TV technology known as AVID.

Players receive commissions from TV companies, which include their choice of presenter, the island where you'll be shooting, the species of giant lizard you

need to capture on film, and a choice of resources to help you get the perfect shots.

Using FPS controls, you then manipulate the camera position in a full 3D environment, place your presenter in the shot, trigger the line of dialogue required and start filming. However, you have to be careful - get too close and the prehistoric beasts will start biting chunks out of you or your terrified presenter - great telly, but you'll lose valuable days filming meaning the budget will go up and profits down.

"The Virtual TV technology will allow us to produce other themed Movie Maker products including pop video directing, war reporting - even a hardcore XXX film shoot!" laughed Hare, who was once prevented from releasing his adult-themed game Sex, Drugs And Rock & Roll. Dinosaur porn? Now there's an untapped market...

Publisher: TBA

Developer: Legba/Kuju

ETA: Q2 2004

■ Website: www.virtualtvonline.com

FOUR PLAY



VU GAMES' RECENT deal with US developer/publisher Majesco (responsible most recently for the Nazi-killing vampire action-adventure *BloodRayne*) has resulted in four new PC titles that will be released next year – *BlowOut*, *Drake*, *Advent Rising* and *Black9*.

BlowOut (developed by Majesco's internal studio Pipedream) revisits the explosive side-scrolling shooters of yore such as SNK's Metal Slug series, and includes 18 levels, masses of weapons that can be fired in 360 degrees and 3D character models by Japanese artist Yasushi Nirasawa, responsible for designing characters in Namco's Soul Calibur and the Final Fantasy film.



Drake has a cool graphical style.

NEW SCREENSHOTS FROM VU GAMES' FORTHCOMING MAJESCO TITLES



Autom mismg - ser in client

Drake (developed by Idol FX) is a thirdperson shooter featuring John Woostyle combat with distinctive comic
book graphics. As a member of the
99 Dragons clan, Drake must
battle through 25 missions using
an armoury of guns, blades
and throwing weapons. He
also has the nifty ability of
being able to summon a
large supernatural
dragon to fight
alongside him.

Advent Rising (developed by GlyphX) is a third-person action game built on the Unreal engine and featuring plenty of sci-fi hokum by famous author Orson Scott Card. The first of a trilogy, Advent Rising centres on the legend

that a powerful, ancient race known as "humans" will one day unite a galaxy threatened by a war-hungry race called the Seekers. Full preview next issue. Black9 (developed by Taldren) is a tactical action RPG set in the year 2080 when nine secret "Illuminati" groups are fighting for control of Earth. Your nano-tech enhanced mercenary can complete missions in various ways, having numerous high-tech gizmos and weapons, plus any NPCs can be helpful or traitors to the cause - it's up to you to find out.

Head to www.majescogames.com for links to all the games and watch out for previews in forthcoming issues.

Good Cop. Bad Cop

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF A MONTH ON PC ZONE

GOOD COP

More PC ZONE exclusives, including the first reviews of the huge games Counter-Strike: Condition Zero, Tomb Raider: The Angel Of Darkness, and Star Wars Galaxies.

Online Zone. Prezzer's smart new gaming section of the mag is, ahem, "da bizniz" – see for yourself on page 100.

PC ZONE's holiday to North Wales. Castles, footie on the beach, Chinese food (with spam in it) and old-skool amusements. Tidy.

Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory. Our exclusive id/Splash Damage giveaway on last issue's discs is still being caned by everyone on the mag. Superb stuff.

BAD COF



An office hotter and sweatier than Michael Winner's Y-fronts. Air conditioning? For girls.

Having to miss Glastonbury because of deadlines – although Steve "King Of Blags" Hill managed to haul himself out of bed and get there.

Sefton's titanic corporate battle with Dial A Flight. Will it never end?

PC ZONE's team losing on penalties to Sports Interactive in the final of Dennis Publishing's footie tournament. Ten years of hurt.

Good Cop (**Mulder**), Bad Cop (**Scully**) from *The X-Files* – suggested by Mark Barker, Coventry. Send in your suggestions for next month's Good Cop and Bad Cop to win a *PC ZONE* goodle-bag!

NUCLEAR FAMILY

DELPHIEYE'S INSANE ULTRAVIOLENT DRUG-BASHING FPS NITRO FAMILY



Nitro Family starts a war on drugs.

ONE OF THE most bizarre games we've played recently has to be a new first-person shooter from Korean company called Delphieye. *Nitro Family* is a manic, tongue-in-cheek blaster featuring a tooled-up hero named Victor Chopski, who carries his wild animaltamer wife Maria around on his shoulders for the entire game. And you thought the Hamilton's were odd...



Dual-handed rocket launchers. Nice.

This psychotic husband and wife team go on a rampage to rescue their baby who has been kidnapped by a gang of evil drug dealers. Victor has a choice of lethal weaponry, including sniper rifles, shotguns and even mini-nukes, which can all be used in juicy dual-fire mode. However when he's involved in a particularly nasty altercation with the enemy, he can launch his jetpack-

powered missus, who flies around dropping wave upon wave of destructive bombs, before settling down again onto her hubby's back.

Using the Serious Sam engine, Nitro Family is a no-brains blaster, but it has a couple of neat tricks up its sleeve, including an Ecstasy Mode for slo-mo balletic gib spraying and a tremendous combo facility allowing you to "juggle" victims in a similar way to beat 'em ups. It's doubtful whether this "Family Perspective Shooter" will ever be released in the UK, but we'll keep you posted on Nitro Family's progress – in the meantime, check out the website for movies and more.

- Publisher: TBA
- Developer: Delphieye
- ETA: TBA
- Website: www.nitrofamily.com



KNIGHT TIME

EXCLUSIVE! RAISING THE DRAWBRIDGE ON SUNFLOWERS' SLICE OF MEDIEVAL STRATEGY, KNIGHTS OF HONOR

GERMAN DEVELOPER and publisher Sunflowers, recently responsible for the excellent Anno 1503 - The New World, has announced its latest PC strategy game. Knights Of Honor is an empire-conquering RTS being developed by Black Sea Studios, that places you in the robes of a medieval European king between the years of 800 and 1300AD. As leader you'll have to keep an eye on the kingdom's coffers, send diplomats to forge alliances with neighbours and use your knights to command vast armies, hopefully becoming ever more 'famous' as you go.

"By 'famous' we mean 'doing great and honourable things in the game'," says Vesselin Handjiev, lead designer. "So, killing a whole surrendered army won't make you famous, but letting them go back to their homes alive will. You'll also be able to spend it just like any other resource to improve the talents of your knights, for example, or for dealing with spies."

But if you think you have to be a royal goodie-two-shoes to win, you're wrong, as Handjiev explains: "You could marry the daughter of Richard the Lionheart, then send your best spy to kill him, and as a result, acquire all of England. And your bride won't suspect anything. Nasty, isn't it?'

Battles are a major part of Knights Of Honor, and Black Sea Studios has employed a system where individual units

fight in squads with formations, influenced greatly by the actions of their leaders. So, if they see your hero Knight slaying all before him, morale goes up and they fight stronger. But if your Knight has his head cut off, they'll likely lose faith in his ability to continue the battle successfully. We'll have more soon - and watch out next month for exclusive shots and info on Sunflowers' other big forthcoming title, ParaWorld... Publisher: Sunflowers

BY NIGHT?

■ FTA · 02 2004

■ Developer: Black Sea Studios

Website: www.blackseastudios.com

Send in spies to infiltrate castles and spoil a young prince's birthday party...

NEW PUBLISHER 4AM EMERGES INTO DAYLIGHT WITH A CLUTCH OF PC GAMES

The Fate: state of the art Al, we're told.

A NEW GAMES publisher has appeared on the UK scene, touting a mixed bag of intriguing titles and threatening to shake up the global market. 4AM, a German company with a background in music production, has exploded on the scene with no less than

four PC releases between now and Christmas.

The first title to appear will be The Fate, an isometric RPG due in stores August 7. We checked out a loosely translated version and it's

White Day: graphically primitive but actually rather creepy. essentially a Korean Diablo clone, but promising one or two original touches. Also on the roster is likewise Korean horror adventure White Day (which is Japan and Korea's version of Valentine's Day, triv fans), first reported in PC ZONE in issue 109. Set in a high school occupied by the souls of the dead, a murderous janitor and the spectre of wartime atrocities, it's a cheery affair due some time in September.

Finally there's Jurassic Wars: Evolution, an RTS that has nothing to do with the films of Steven Spielberg, and an as-yet unnamed dance-mat title, due in October. We'll keep you fully briefed on all these games in the next few months.

Publisher: 4AM

Developer: Various

ETA: August-October

BEHIND ENEMY LINES

EXCLUSIVE! HUN-BELIEVABLE WWII COVERT-OPS ACTION FROM WIDESCREEN GAMES' AIRBORNE TROOPS

WE CAN ALL agree that the BBC programme 'Allo 'Allo was an accurate and harrowing portrayal of a cafe-owning businessman's survival under the brutal Nazi regime of occupied France. However, Widescreen Games has taken this familiar WWII scenario and spun it into the atmospheric, third-person action-adventure Airborne Troops.

"We want a game with a well-balanced mix of action and infiltration," says head of productions Norbert Cellier. "But Airborne Troops is also an adventure title with a real story behind the game, as it takes place 48 hours before D-Day. Through extensive studies of archives and historical documents, all

the weapons, uniforms, locations, and situations have been recreated as they were at the time for complete authenticity."

As US officer John Welsh, you must complete commando-style objectives, picking up weapons and ammo when you can to use in both stealthy operations and firefights.

"We want to surprise the player," continues Cellier. "We've introduced very advanced elements of detection involving view, sound, shadow and light, which allowed us to develop enemy AI with very realistic behaviour, as well as intuitive and solid gameplay."



before D-Day. Through extensive studies Airborne Troops promises authentic WWII thrills.

You'll be able to get your hands on authentic Allied and Axis weapons such as a Thompson M1 submachine-gun, a Mauser Karabiner 98K rifle and a trusty Panzerschreck rocket launcher for taking out tanks and heavily-defended areas. Missions include a daring raid on a farm to help rescue a couple of captured Resistance bosses, and the destruction of a Nazi flying bomb factory – although we still haven't spotted any objectives involving the stealing of "a painting of the Madonna wiz za big boobies" just yet. More soon. And by the way, did you know the guy who played Herr Flick now works in our offices? We kid you not.

■ Publisher: Playlogic ■ Developer: Widescreen ■ ETA: Q4 2003 ■ Website: www.playlogic.nl

SWORD PLAY

REVOLUTION'S BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON



Phwoar, she's a bit of an Eiffel.

IT'S BEEN A while since we've seen anything of the third instalment of the *Broken Sword* series, so we decided to catch up with Revolution's Charles Cecil recently to play his new game and see just how the adventure is progressing.

The Sleeping Dragon again stars lawyer/ adventurer George Stobbart and femme-fatale Nico Collard in a globe-trotting story that involves a deadly conspiracy to re-awaken an ancient power source that could destroy mankind. The dramatic opening sees hapless George escaping with his copilot from a crashed cargo plane teetering on the edge of an Amazon cliff. Using a combination of box-pushing, counter-balancing, fire-extinguisher hurling and beer-opening we managed to escape without plunging to our deaths in an enjoyable



The interface is slicker than an eel's pecker.

sequence of puzzles that bodes well for the rest of the adventure.

The leap to a full-3D game is working well too, with beautiful stylised graphics and a new control system using an intuitive 'context-sensitive' icon interface to replace the more traditional mouse point-and-click system in previous adventures.

Whether blood-thirsty gamers will warm to an adventure without gunplay is a concern. But if it delivers what it promises it could well be the first game to genuinely deserve the tag 'interactive movie'.

- Publisher: THQ
- Developer: Revolution
- ETA: September
- Website: www.brokensword3.com



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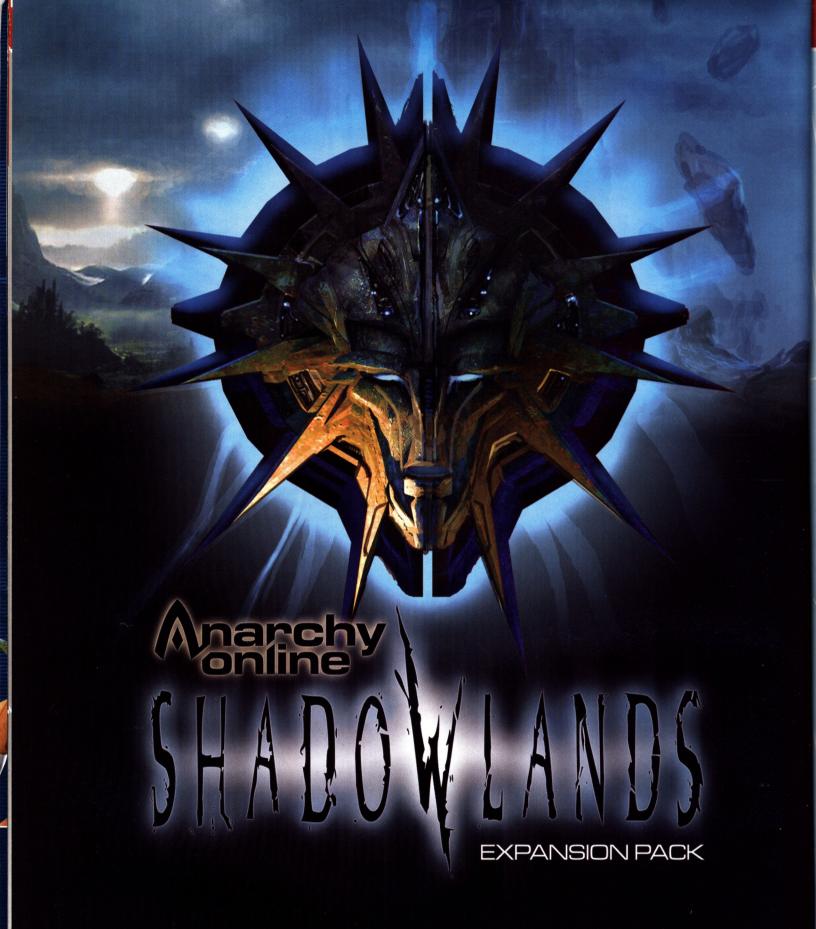
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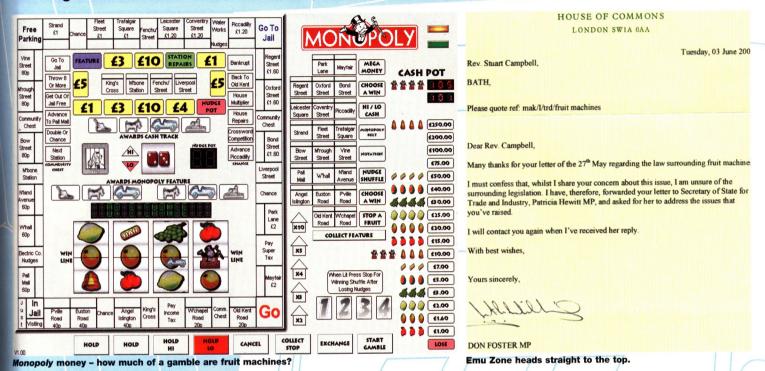


PLAY. COM MOVIES MUSIC GAMES

FREE DELVER

EMULATION ZONE

Breaking news from the world of emulation, with retro reanimator Stuart Campbell



THE TIME MACHINE

EMULATION is fun, isn't it? Playing a load of old games on your PC, enjoying titles that we were never supposed to see here in the UK, or just saving a load of space and clutter under the tellie by having all your 'consoles' in one nice neat PC-shaped box. But this month, emulation is going to be more than a bit of harmless fun. This month, we're going to see if emulation can change the world.

Most of us like a little gamble now and again, and Emulation Zone is

Emu Zone wants you to try something. At the bottom of this piece, you'll find links to the MFME fruit machine emulator program, a layout and ROM files for the popular real-life £250-jackpot machine Club Monopoly, and a 'save state' file, containing the fruity's internal RAM saved at the point where, from a factory reset, the machine has taken in £1,000 and paid out not a single penny (the legal minimum payout for a fruit machine is 70 per cent – though this one is set at 86 per cent – but amazingly

"Have you ever wondered if fruit machines play fair? Thanks to emulation, **ZONE**'s found out"

prepared to bet (appropriately enough) that most PCZ readers put the odd pound coin into a fruit machine, whether it be dropping the change from a round into a pub machine, or playing the four-reel £1,000-jackpot monsters found in more sophisticated locations.

ONE-ARMED BANDITS

And Emu Zone is equally sure that everyone who's ever played a fruit machine and lost on a High-Low gamble has wondered, as the machine waited for you to go higher on a '2' and then spun in a '1', whether it was playing fair or not. The only problem was, without a time machine it was impossible to know either way. But now, thanks to emulation, we have one.

there's no stipulation about how long it has to take to achieve that percentage). Using these files (and pretending to put a pound in by pressing zero key) you can uncover something very interesting and extremely sinister.

On your second spin, you'll be awarded nudges. Nudge Reel 1 for a three-oranges £1.60 win. You now have a chance to gamble using the High-Low reel. And here's where Emu Zone is going to give you a hand, because Emu Zone – thanks to its emulation time machine – knows what the numbers are going to be. You start off with a 10. Normally you'd go "Low", but the next number is a 12, so go "High" instead. The next numbers are 4, 6, 2, 12, 7, 4 and 5, so choose accordingly.

By this stage you'll have a £25 win. But the machine's clearly in a paying mood, so you may as well continue, right? Wrong. If you gamble "High" on the 5, the machine will spin in a 3 and you'll lose. If, on the other hand, you gamble "Low", it'll spin in a 9. This happened on every single occasion. (Quit the emulator, copy the original RAM file in and try again to see for yourself. Then ask yourself if you think it's fair for a 'gambling' machine to be rigged like this.)

This isn't gambling, readers. In fact, this could be construed as fraud. After the machine kicks in with a so-called "block", your maximum winnings are pre-determined. The fruity is presenting the situation as a 'gamble', but whatever you do, you lose. You are, to put it simply, being conned.

ROTTEN FRUIT

Club Monopoly is merely one example – it's in no way even remotely unique in this behaviour. It's just that until the advent of fruit machine emulation, there was no way for the fruit machine manufacturers to be found out.

But now they have, and Emu Zone is going to do something about it. The information in this column has been forwarded to Emu Zone's MP, the UK Gaming Board, and the Department of Culture, which is responsible for regulating gambling in Britain, and the Department of Trade and Industry too. The fruit machine companies have so far refused to answer the allegations,

meaning as far as Emu Zone can see, the way is clear for a class-action lawsuit to be brought against the manufacturers on behalf of every fruit-machine player in the country. And we've got half a mind do to just that. Just watch this space (and the website below) to see if the world changes...

LINKS

thumbs.aloft.users.btopenworld.com/ fruitemu.zip – the emulator

thumbs.aloft.users.btopenworld.com/ monopoly.zip – the Club Monopoly file and ROMs

thumbs.aloft.users.btopenworld.com/ ram.zip - the saved-state file

www.fairplay-campaign.co.uk/ - updates on the current situation

www.retrochat.com - talk with the creator of the emulator file that revealed the great fruity swindle

WHAT IS EMULATION?



By installing an emulator, you can run games that were programmed for different platforms – such as coin-ops – in their original form.

The games come in the form of a ROM (Read Only Memory) which you load into the emulator to run. There are legal issues though, and unless you own the original game, it's often against the law to download a ROM. For that reason, we can't give you links to ROMs, though we can to the emulators themselves.

STAR TREK, HAS DIED.

Tributes are flooding in from the world of interactive entertainment following the termination of Activision's Star Trek licence. It was five years old, and leaves several offspring, many of them wretched.

The premature death comes in the wake of the publisher suing media company Viacom, accusing them of breaching the ten-year contract by ignoring the franchise to the detriment of Activision's games, effectively treating them like unwanted dogs.

Activision alleges that "through its actions and inactions, Viacom has let the once proud Star Trek franchise stagnate and decay." The claim follows the jubilant news that there are currently no plans for more Star Trek films.

Players of online goblin festival EverQuest are despicable sexist bigots scarcely more advanced than cave-dwelling troglodytes, a survey has shown. The shocking fact was revealed by a study of the price paid for highlevel game characters, with males on average commanding a 12 per cent premium, despite offering no tangible advantage. Results also showed that despite 90 per cent of players being male, only 80 per cent chose characters that also sported testes, the remainder clearly enjoying some kind of gender-bending fantasies, particularly as they generally gravitated toward the more attractive specimens. Professor Edward Castronova, an economics professor at California State University, blasted: "There are very few female ogres and trolls." He's obviously not visiting the right pubs.

The developer of controversial serial killer simulation Postal has finally been victorious in a six-year legal battle with the United States Postal Service, who attempted to sue them over the game's content. The Trademark Trial and Appeals Board of the US Department of Commerce has dismissed the case with prejudice. Running With Scissors chief Vince Desi blasted: "With unlimited financial resources comes unlimited ego. Postal and Postal 2 represent everything the USPS isn't: a successful private enterprise that will never have to rely on an irrevocable government contract to keep its pockets perpetually lined with cash. We're pleased with the ruling, although everyone involved knows we never should have had to fight this frivolous lawsuit in the first place. Our game is funny. Theirs is sick." No Christmas cards for him.

"There are very few female ogres and trolls"

Mace in the Place

EXCLUSIVE HANDS-ON PLAY OF WARTHOG'S FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER MACE GRIFFIN BOUNTY HUNTER



Mace Griffin has FPS and space shooter elements.

WE DIDN'T hold out much hope for Warthog's first-person shooter Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter after the previous publisher Electronic Arts refused to release any playable code or screenshots. However, this month new owners VU Games breezed by the office with a full build of the PC game, which gave us a chance to see and play it for ourselves.

Already released on consoles, Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter is a visceral mix of full-on 3D blaster and space combat, with a rack of 21 player and ship weapons, plus a decent splattering of gore. Voiced by rock god Henry Rollins, Mace Griffin is an ex-Special Ops officer, who becomes a bounty hunter after spending ten years in a military prison for a crime he didn't commit.

Warthog has obviously spent a lot of time fine-tuning the Al of enemies, who duck and dive out of the way, playing hide-and-seek with you across levels set in outer space and on numerous exotic alien worlds. Mace Griffin has a definite arcade feel, but the addition of mouse-look for the PC version is superb and the vastlyimproved graphics make sure you can witness the ragdoll physics of bodies slumping to the ground and gibs flying around the screen in brutal detail. Altogether, Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter could be a surprise hit - we'll have a full preview soon.

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TWO-FACED





MAX PAYNE IS BACK BUT WHO IS HE?

AFTER OUR exclusive Max Payne 2: The Fall Of Max Payne preview last issue most of you picked up on the fact that the new Max looks different... older, less constipated and, dare we say it, a bit more rugged? Well, there's a simple reason behind the new look...

In the original game a lot of the faces were supplied by the Remedy development team, with Max being played by the scriptwriter, Sam Lake. According to Scott Miller from 3D Realms, this wasn't practical for the sequel and professional actors have been pulled in to reprise the roles.

"The original game used Remedy developers, family

That was the old Max Payne, this is the new one. Deal with it. and friends for faces. This time around, professional actors are being used and they're all being hired from the New York City area. The game will be better, in part, because Remedy's developers are not being distracted by photo shoots, and they can focus on their real jobs: making the game. The good news is that Max's voice will be the same."

So there you have it. Mystery solved. Or is it? Rumours are now circulating that the new Max Payne is being played by Brian Capron, aka King Nasty, Richard Hillman from Coronation Street. The timing works and Brian is refusing to be drawn into the debate, although when we contacted Remedy they said, "Who? Look if you phone us again we're going to have your number traced." More news as and when we get it.

RED ALERT

STRATEGY CAPTAIN SCARLET: RETALIATION READY FOR SEPTEMBER LAUNCH

CULT TV PRODUCER Gerry

Anderson will be back on our screens – well, our PC monitors – this September with the release of Batfish Studios' Captain Scarlet: Retaliation. Based on the popular 1960s

"Supermarionation" programme, Captain Scarlet: Retaliation is a tactical strategy game where you take control of the five Spectrum agents against the evil Captain Black and his alien Mysteron cohorts.

Since we last saw the game in April, Batfish has been busy refining the abilities of the player characters, in some cases removing or completely changing gameplay ideas. "For example one

character had an electronic barricade which could be used to trap enemies," director Philip Harris told *PC ZONE*. "We came to the conclusion this added very little to the game, so we replaced it with

a model helicopter, which can be used to

distract
guards, or
used to
knock out
Mysteron
agents.

Changes like this can make a huge difference to the quality of le game."

One of the 14 missions currently



being tweaked is a level involving a missing Angel pilot, Symphony, who is being held captive by a group of Mysteron agents in an underground tomb. Captain Scarlet and Captain Blue must make their way through the catacombs, avoiding or neutralising any enemy agents before rescuing Symphony and preventing the Mysterons from escaping with a number of valuable stolen artefacts.

So how much input has Gerry Anderson had with the game? "Gerry is pretty busy with the production of the new *Captain Scarlet* TV series," said Harris. "But we're working very

closely with license-holders
Carlton to ensure that
everything, including the
new vehicles we have
created, are true to the series."
Make a date for our worldexclusive review next issue.

- Publisher: Batfish Studios
- Developer: Batfish Studios
- ETA: September 5
- Website: www.batfishstudios.com



All strings removed in post production.



Aaaaaaaaaaaaagh!

PC ZONE's new boy Will Porter after scalding his hand and hospitalising himself making tea for the team. It's a tough job, but someone's got to do it.

Take 2 needs to STFU in my opinion.

3D Realms' George Broussard hits back on the forums over the continuing feud with Take 2 over Duke Nukem Forever. STFU means "Shut The F*** Up" in case you didn't know.

T Aaaaaaaaaaaaagh!

Martin Korda after electrocuting himself on the PC ZONE water dispenser. The Mighty Korgon is now endowed with super-electric powers as well as the ability to rip out people's spines.

MThis upgrade pack is deadlier than a SARS enema. Postal 2 runs faster and hotter than Ben Johnson on steroids.

Running With Scissors' CEO Vince Desi on the new Postal 2 patch, which allows players to take on the Taliban in Afghanistan with machine-guns that fire scissors.



VIVENDI CAUGHT IN A BLIZZARD

HEAVYWEIGHTS LEAVE COMPANY IN A STORM, BUT WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR GAMERS?

WARCRAFT, STARCRAFT and *Diablo*... It's fair to say that games-maker Blizzard is the developer of some of the most valuable franchises on the planet and when four of its most powerful employees resign, the implications are massive.

Erich Schaefer, Max Schaefer, David Brevik (all cofounders) and Bill Roper (vice-president) were the big-hitters behind action-RPG specialist Blizzard before leaving, and are already in talks over what to call their new games company. If reports are to be believed the decision to resign was fairly spontaneous and centered on a row with VU Games over the direction of future projects. Whether this was because VU

Games wanted the team to concentrate on its cash cows, rather than branch out in a more creative and adventurous direction can't be confirmed at the time of going to press.

However what is certain is that parent company Vivendi has been trying to sell its £350m games division for several months now and the departure of the major



Warcraft is one of the PC's big games.

brains behind Blizzard is a huge blow to the French giant. The immediate fallout will see *Warcraft* and the other big franchises stick with Blizzard and VU Games, but what's more interesting are the new projects being lined up by industry legend Bill Roper and his merry Blizzard departees. Watch this space for more developments.

"Vivendi has been trying to sell its £350m games division for several months now"

CHARTS

Your one-stop guide to game releases past, present and future. Whether a game is lost, looming or selling like sim-cakes, this is where you'll find it

EA

ChartTrack T P 10





Those mini-humans fended off the shenanigans of Tommy Vercetti last time round, and this month even the might of Star Trek can't shift them from the top spot. The Sims has been in the charts for so long that we've given up bitching about them. Almost.



Elite Force's sequel may not be the most original thing ever, but at least you get to use a Tricorder and meet up with old slapheaded Captain Jean-Luc. Everyone should get to shoot a Klingon at least once in their life, so here's your chance.

	THE SIMS: SUPERSTAR	EA	59%
₹	TITLE	PUBLISHER	SCORE

2 STAR TREK: ELITE FORCE 2 **ACTIVISION** 74% NEW

3 CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 4 **EIDOS** 90%

4 THE SIMS: DELUXE EDITION EA N/A

5 **GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY** ROCKSTAR 95%

RISE OF NATIONS MICROSOFT 90% 6 78%

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 3 CODEMASTERS 86% 8 NEW

72% 9 **ATARI** ENTER THE MATRIX

COMMAND & CONQUER: GENERALS EA 86% 10 RE

YOUR SHOUT

7

I guess it could be worse. The Sims is only Glad to see Elite Force 2 and Generals taking up three places. I dread to think that there, but where's Ghost Master? I really there may come a day when it takes up hope this doesn't end up being yet another every place in the chart. That day we know underrated British-made game.

THE SIMS: UNLEASHED

DarthMorbus

it's gone too far and we need a revolution.

NB Nmare

EA

Have your say at www.pczone.co.uk

Our house is a Sim-free zone. My wife keeps pestering me to get it for her but I generally just lock the cupboard again once I have fed her.

PlumpOrgan



With the past season long gone and only a few dodgy international games for sustenance, CM4 is filling the football-sized hole in all of our lives. To be honest. some of the ZONE team is so addicted, they find it hard to remember what the real game looks like...



Straight into a respectable eighth position is the third Colin McRae driving experience. Codemasters' rally game feels so realistic you find yourself shouting "150 metres! Hard right!" on the weekend drive to the shops. A must for driving game aficianados.

megastores

THE SIMS: SUPERSTAR

TOP 10

THE SIMS: DELUXE EDITION FA

COLIN MCRAE BALLY 3 **CODEMASTERS** 3

ENTER THE MATRIX ATARI

GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY ROCKSTAR 5

STAR TREK: ELITE FORCE 2 ACTIVISION

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 4 EIDOS

MICROSOFT 8 **RISE OF NATIONS**

VU GAMES HULK

10 COMMAND & CONQUER: GENERALS EA COMPETITION



megastores

Win the entire Virgin Top

Once again, PC ZONE and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win every game in the current Virgin Top 10. All you have to do to enter the draw is answer the following:

QUESTION: What is the name of the ceremonial weapon brandished by Klingons?

Answers on a postcard to: PC ZONE Chart Compo Issue 132, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1T 4JD. Closing date: August 21, 2003

- Please include your name, address, daytime phone number, email address, job title and company name (and age if under 18).
- Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies
- Please indicate whether you are a current subscriber to PC ZONE

Terms and conditions: Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.

INCOMING!

PC ZONE'S RELEASE SCHEDULE FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. ALL APPROXIMATE MONTHLY DATES ARE CORRECT AT THE TIME OF GOING TO PRESS.

		IST
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AGE OF WONDERS: SHADOW MAGIC	GATHERING
BREED	CDV
COUNTER-STRIKE: CONDITION ZERO	VU GAMES
DRAGON'S LAIR 3D	UBI SOFT
EMPIRE OF MAGIC	NOBILIS
LINE OF SIGHT: VIETNAM	ATARI
MADDEN NFL 2004	EA
PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN	UBI SOFT
NEIGHBOURS FROM HELL 2	BIG BEN
RAILROAD PIONEER	BIG BEN
THE GREAT ESCAPE	SCI
TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS	EIDOS
TRON 2.0	DISNEY

SEPTEMBER

MICROSOFT
KONAMI
KOCH MEDIA
BATFISH
KOCH MEDIA
EIDOS
SCI
EA
THQ
EA
CDV
VU GAMES
VU GAMES
CDV
UBI SOFT
BIG BEN
BIG BEN
GATHERING
ACTIVISION
EA
EMPIRE
KOCH MEDIA

OCTOBER

BATTLEFIELD 1942: SECRET WEAPONS OF WWII	EA EA
BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON	THQ
DELTA FORCE: BLACK HAWK DOWN - TEAM SABRE	NOVALOGIC
DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR	EIDOS
EMPIRES: DAWN OF THE MODERN WORLD	ACTIVISION
LOCK ON	UBI SOFT
LORDS OF EVERQUEST	SOE
PAINKILLER	DREAMCATCHER
SACRED	ASCARON
SECRET WEAPONS OVER NORMANDY	ACTIVISION
SILENT HILL 3	KONAMI
THE LORD OF THE RINGS: TROTK	EA
X2: THE THREAT	KOCH MEDIA
XIII	UBI SOFT

NOVEMBER

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL	UBI SOFT
CIVILIZATION: CONQUESTS	ATARI
FAR CRY	UBI SOFT
GROUND CONTROL 2: OPERATION EXODUS	VU GAMES
HALO: COMBAT EVOLVED	MICROSOFT
HOMEWORLD 2	VU GAMES
KNIGHTS OF THE TEMPLE	TDK
MACE GRIFFIN BOUNTY HUNTER	VU GAMES
POP IDOL	CODEMASTERS
PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME	UBI SOFT
STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC	ACTIVISION
TERMINATOR 3: WAR OF THE MACHINES	ATARI
URU: AGES BEYOND MYST	UBI SOFT
WARLORDS IV: HEROES OF ETHERIA	UBI SOFT
WORMS 3	SEGA

DECEMBER

EVERQUEST 2	UBI SOFT
FULL THROTTLE: HELL ON WHEELS	ACTIVISION
HARRY POTTER: QUIDDITCH WORLD CUP	EA
HIDDEN & DANGEROUS 2	GATHERING
LORDS OF EVERQUEST	UBI SOFT
MORTYR 2	TBA
STAR WARS GALAXIES: AN EMPIRE DIVIDED	ACTIVISION

MISSING IN ACTION

The war's not over until the last game comes home...

CRUSADERS: BATTLE FOR OUTREMER

IT ALL WENT strangely quiet on Black Cactus' promising 3D RTS a few weeks ago. Well, it now turns out that Wanadoo has "reassessed its publishing direction", which means *Crusaders* will sadly not get a release. Check out this month's Best of British feature on page 56 for more info.

- Publisher: Wanadoo
 Developer: Black Cactus
- ETA: KIA



DF: BLACK HAWK DOWN - TEAM SABRE



BECAUSE OF Novalogic's new multiplayer shooter *Joint Operations* suddenly being announced for release this autumn (see page 13), the company's *Delta Force: Black Hawk Down* expansion pack has been delayed until 2004. As well as 30 new multiplayer maps, *Team Sabre* will include two new single-player missions.

- Publisher: Novalogic
- Developer: Novalogic
- **ETA:** Q1 2004
- Website: www.novalogic.com

DRAGON EMPIRES

PC ZONE HAS heard it whispered that those wanting to kick some dragon ass in Codemasters' rather smart-looking MMOG epic will have to hold on to their broadswords until May next year. Keep tabs on our new online section for further updates.

- Publisher: Codemasters
- Developer: Codemasters
- ETA: Summer 2004
- Website: www.codemasters.com/dragonempires



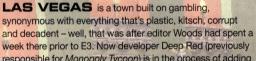
US TOP 10

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1 THE SIMS: SUPERSTAR	EA
2 THE SIMS: DELUXE EDITION	EA
3 BATTLEFIELD 1942	EA EA
4 RISE OF NATIONS	MICROSOFT
5 FINDING NEMO: NEMO'S UNDERWATER WORL	D OF FUN THQ
6 HOYLE CASINO 2003	SIERRA
7 THE SIMS: UNLEASHED	EA
8 DIABLO 2	BLIZZARD
9 FINDING NEMO	THQ
10 GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY	ROCKSTAR



MAKE IT BIG

You're so money! Glitzy screenshots from Deep Red's cash rich casino outing



responsible for Monopoly Tycoon) is in the process of adding the final bulbs to the Topless Revue sign and ironing the last few creases out of the Elvis impersonator's white sequinned

suit for its new game Vega\$: Make It Big.

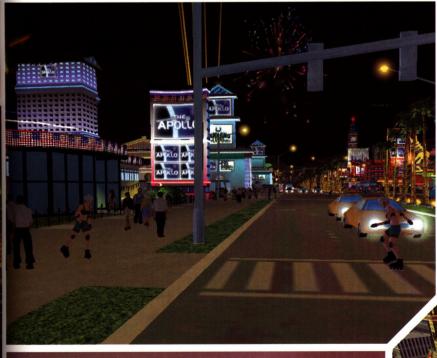
OK, there have been a couple of other Casino-based sims released recently - Konami's Casino Inc. and VU Games' Casino Empire spring to mind - but this is a very different card game. In addition to running a casino, Vega\$ gives you more than 100 buildings to play with on The Strip including lap dancing bars, rollercoasters, shopping malls and hotels, with your Al-controlled rivals competing for trade right next door to you.

Which is where the skill comes in. With 22 different kinds of punters, you have to make sure your burgeoning empire appeals to everyone from the businessman-on-the-piss to the family enjoying a holiday - have too many sleazy strip clubs and Mr and Mrs Middle-America will spend their fat dollars on the competition. There are even bonus missions, such as the promotion of a major boxing event, which can net you millions if you wow the tourists with Don King-style razzmatazz. There's true fear and loathing in Vega\$: Make it Big...

- Publisher: Empire
- Developer: Deep Red
- **ETA:** September
- Website: www.deepred.co.uk













A BITTER WAR WAGES ONLINE!

ATTACK OF THE CALLS

Online gaming is under assault from hackers! Is this the end of honest fragging as we know it? David McCandless talks to both sides to find out...

SECRETLY you call yourself 'The King'. Because that's who you are. Serious time and money have gone into developing yourself into the ultimate online warrior. The years of practice have cost you two girlfriends, four mice, and a palpable downturn in the quality of your skin – but hey, it's been worth it. Every server you play on, every player who crosses your path – you ownz.

Lately though, something has happened. You've started losing. Once you dominated the leader board. Now you barely scratch the top half of the table. Player after player takes you down. Not just beating you – raping you. They know all your tricks. They're quicker on the draw. They never miss. "Nice shot". "Well played". They soak up

HEATING

DEATH

all the compliments meant for you and leave you steaming with a score that would make Helen Keller throw her optical mouse across the room.

"Shit," you think. "Your powers are weak, old man."

You've heard talk of cheats, the 'hacks' some players use to boost their abilities and get an edge over their opponents. But your favourite servers bristle with an impressive array of all the latest anti-cheat protection systems, updated continuously.

Unless...

One day, you find and download a cheat. Sheepishly, you install it into some far-flung folder on your machine. You log onto your server anonymously, expecting to be detected, kicked off, and Banned For All Time in seconds.

Nothing happens. Instead, suddenly you can see through walls. Your gun never misses. You're pulling off headshots left, right and centre. A radar eagerly displays the location of your enemies, who now glow fluorescent yellow and are easy to spot crouching in even the darkest shadows.

Jesus! All that time and effort you put into practice.

Now you're unbeatable. A technologyenhanced Terminator. You're a cheat.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END?

The use of 'hacks' to cheat in online gaming is out of control. Quake III, Diablo II, Medal Of Honor, UT, Warcraft III, America's Army, Counter-Strike – few if any of the top online games these days can claim to be cheat-free. Most, in fact, are riddled. An estimated 10-15 per cent of players cheat regularly.

Worse, the idea that people can cheat undetected has now been seeded throughout the online gaming community. Players now no longer know for sure if their opponents are genuine or cheating 'hax0r' scum. Once the scene celebrated skill and sportsmanship. Now paranoia reigns supreme. Games are ill-tempered. Chat channels are clogged with bitching. Accusations fly like bullets.

"Nobody trusts nobody," as one veteran gamer puts it. "If you play honestly and well, you get accused of cheating and kicked out of the game."

Worse still, the hacks seem unstoppable. Like viruses they evolve rapidly to bypass the anti-cheat technology deployed against them. The cheat coders are unrepentant. Publishers are standoffish. Players are enraged. Many are deserting games in droves. For those who stay, the only recourse involves ever more militant measures ancreased security, zero tolerance, extensive blacklists, lifetime bans, and private walled servers only for the vetted and the known.

Technology can't be uninvented.

The cheats are here to stay. Are cheats killing online gaming?







Kinda takes the tension out of combat.



Gaining a small advantage can be hard to resist.



High body counts can often give cheaters away.



Glow models and no textures make enemies somewhat easy to pick out.

THE ARMS RACE

In the War on Cheaters, the 3D action game scene is the frontline. While even subscription-based and server-side games like Warcraft III have suffered from cheats, their server-side code makes them less vulnerable to attack.

Meanwhile, popular action games like

Quake III and

Unreal Tournament have suffered the brunt of the damage. The more popular a game, the more it suffers from cheaters, so it's no surprise that the longest – and most bitter – battle has been fought over the undisputed lord of online games: Half-Life and its various mods. And it's here, among Half-Life's desert ruins and warehouses that the future of public online gaming may well be decided...

THE BATTLE FOR HALF-LIFE

For four years now, HL cheaters and anti-cheaters have

been locked in an almighty arms race. At its peak, the pendulum swung on a daily basis. New anticheat updates would be released, detecting and neutralising the latest hacks. Then the 'hax0rs' would respond, adapting their code within hours, at first mildly compromising and then completely pissing over the protection.

Now, however, increased cunning and technological sophistication on both sides of the battle line have slowed the pace. Today, like brow-furrowed grandmasters playing chess by post, each devastating move in the War on Cheats comes after days of anxious waiting. Let's take a trip to one side of this divide.

Cheating-Death

www.cheating-death.com

Cheating-Death v1.1.2

You may now start your game.
Do not close this window until you are finished with your game.

This software is free and comes with ABSOLUTELY NO WARRANTY.

Start in system tray

The secret weapon of The Cheat Police.

THE HAXOR'S STORY

If you passed Joolz in the street, you would not glance at him twice. In his 'fcuk' T-shirt and heavyset glasses, the 23-year-old looks every bit the corporate software engineer. By day, he's a coder, in a cubicle, in an office, in the south of England. By night, however, he is Joolz notorious cheat coder and scourge of the online gaming community. His creation, the famous and multi-featured JoolzCheat for Counter-Strike is a near work of art, the elegant product of a devious imagination. It's all here: a selection of aimbots, wallhacks, over-bright models, no smoke, no shadows - a fully-featured suite of performance enhancements to make you to an all-powerful, nigh-on indestructible God in the Counter-Strike world. It even hooks into Winamp to play MP3s and - "ffs!" - it even has its own IRC chat client.

"One of my favourite creations is called Lookaim," he says proudly. "If you've got

>AIMBOT
aim8shoot
just aim
both off
>BURSTMODE
>AIM AT
>AIMING
>OPTIONS
-BINDINGS
-BOT FOV

X-GENETA
59552

Hacks are increasingly sophisticated.

your back to someone and they look at you, it spins you round and shoots them. You looking at me? Bang! Not anymore you're not!"

Joolz readily admits that his hack has "probably" ruined his favourite game. But he is unrepentant.

"I don't see cheating as wholly right," he says. "But why do people cheat at anything? Whether it's athletics or any sort of sport, they cheat because they can," he says.

He sees cheat coding as his own personal way of beating the game. Other people may painstakingly master the in-game weapons, the maps and the angles over months until they can pull off a lightning headshot, under fire, from 400 yards. Joolz hacks.

What's more, Joolzcheat is popular. It's had hundreds of thousands of downloads. Perversely though, Joolz has little truck for those who download his cheats: "I've sat there for hours on end,

THE HISTORY OF CHEATS

CHEATING HAS EXPLODED SINCE THE DAWN OF ONLINE FRAGGING, BUT IT'S BEEN AROUND FAR LONGER THAN THAT...

Ever since the dawn of gaming, there have been cheats for games. First came POKEs, microscopic bit-sized alterations in the program code – key-hole surgery, like shifting one gene in a chromosome. Just enough to stop your three lives from counting down when you die. The result: Infinite Lives.

Then, as programmers realised they couldn't stop this early form of hacking, inbuilt cheat modes appeared. Often self-referential words or phrases you had to type at particular moments (the programmer's girlfriend's name, etc), or else labyrinthine strings of keyboard commands ("left arrow, right arrow, fire, fire, fire, left arrow, down, down, left"). Cheat modes undoubtedly ruined gameplay, but games were often so frustratingly difficult, it was worth it.

Later came 'trainers', precursors of today's online gaming 'hacks'. Running in the background, they changed your energy level or ammo wherever they were stored in memory. Unfortunately, with the rise of the Internet they often contained back-door trojans, beaming your credit card details back to the hackers while you gleefully ran around the streets of *Grand Theft Auto* in God mode.



For honest players, this sort of behaviour is sickening.

"Joolzcheat was loaded up 250,000 times in two weeks. Most cheaters come from France"

JOOLZ HACKER

writing the thing," he says bitterly.
"They've just downloaded their skills off a website."

He takes revenge on them by building backdoors into his code. One allows him to spot when other people are using his cheat on a server and disable it remotely. "Idon't like being beaten by people using my cheat," he explains.

In the past, he has also secretly gathered information from his users. The logs have revealed some interesting

statistics. "The cheat was loaded up 250,000 times in a two week period by 4,500 separate players," he says. "Most cheaters come from France. After that it's Japan. Then the USA. That means, proportionally, more French people cheat that any other country."

One version even stole players' CDkeys and emailed them to Joolz HQ. But that's one of the accepted perils of using cheats: you never know what you're downloading.

THE STATE OF PLAY

THE WAR IS STILL RAGING. ADVANCEMENTS ARE MADE EVERY DAY ON BOTH SIDES. THESE REPORTS FROM THE FRONTLINE WERE CORRECT AT TIME OF WRITING

DIABLO II

Blizzard is hard on cheaters – other developers/publishers take note. In April this year, they closed more than 12,000 *Warcraft* and more than 131,000 *Diablo II* accounts.

MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT

Several cheats are currently available. "MoH probably suffers more cheating than any other game, with the exception of Counter-Strike," say its players. Talks with Punkbuster broke down. EA is consulting players on how to proceed.

COUNTER-STRIKE/DAY OF DEFEAT

Despite a monumental effort by Valve with its VAC system, five year bans and other punitive measures, cheating in CS is an epidemic. United Admin's Cheating-Death is the most effective anti-cheat system but is only available on selected servers. It's also incompatible with VAC. Doh!

HALF-LIFE: TEAM FORTRESS

Hopelessly riddled. Almost unplayable these days.

OHAKE

Now Punkbustered, although there are a few aimbots still in circulation.

WARCRAFT II

Still vulnerable, despite crackdowns. Statshack, resource viewers and maphack are all currently in use, allowing players to view the enemy's positions and resource stores, among other things.

RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

Officially cheat-free thanks to Punkbuster, although low popularity may be a contributing factor.

BATTLEFIELD 1942

Accuracy doubler, speed hack, and day-glo models available. According to producer Ken Balthaser, 1.4 patch should "alleviate 95 per cent of cheats". 24/7 admins coming soon.

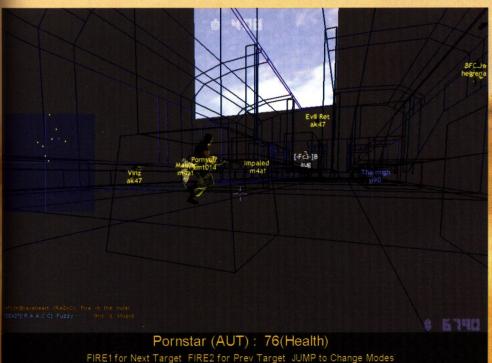
UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003

Woo. We couldn't find any hacks for this game at time of writing. But believe you me, that doesn't mean there aren't any.

Joolz is unabashed about the appeal of cheat-coding for him. "I'm famous," he says. "I get a buzz from it. I walk into an IRC chat room. I get loads of hellos. I get loads of: 'Hi, how you doing, when's the next version?'"

Joolz is an old man in the hax0r world. Most of his contemporaries are teenagers. They share the same anarchistic egotism of traditional hackers. But their sense of responsibility can be as limited. One of the most highly revered game hax0rs, the 15-year-old German kid 'System', for instance, was asked what he would do to stop cheats. "No videogames anymore," he answered.

Despite his advancing years, Joolz has no intention of retiring. His latest, greatest



Your text messages can only be seen by other Spectators in the words of one cheater: "I like going under the map and shooting people. It's f***ing hilarious."





Glowshells and wallhacks at work in Quake III.



Cheating clan JAPS in action. 301 kills, zero deaths and 99.3% headshots.



Neon glow models at work in the darkest recesses of Medal of Honor.

THE SCIENCE OF CHEATING

NOT ALL CHEATS AND HACKS WORK THE SAME WAY. HERE'S A QUICK RUNDOWN

There are three main types of cheats:

1. Exploits

Naturally occurring bugs or clever scripts that exploit bugs or holes in the game's code or maps.

2. OpenGL hacks

These involve rewriting the graphics card driver to provide transparent walls and other visual hacks. Usually difficult to install.

3. Client Hooks

The most widespread and damaging type of cheat. A client hook is a piece of code that sits between the client (say the Counter-Strike mod) and the engine. It intercepts messages between the two, changing bits of them, and then passes them back.

Anti-cheat technology

Most anti-cheat apps either try to detect the cheats running in memory, or

encrypt the signals, or both. This is how VAC and Punkbuster work. UA's Cheating-Death is different. It's a clienthook itself. It acts like a cheat. If it's installed, no hack can insinuate itself between the engine and the mod. It also doesn't try to block cheats but instead reduces their efficiency by corrupting the data slightly, enough to make aimbots and wallhacks useless, but not enough to spoil the game. This unique approach makes it nigh-on unbeatable, according to Joolz the hacker:

PCZ If CD was adopted universally across all HL servers, then it would kill Half-Life cheats?

JOOLZ It would effectively yes. PCZ There's no way to bypass CD? JOOLZ No. Not really. Not that's worthwhile.

You read it here first.

For more try www.counter-hack.net

CONFESSIONS OF A CHEATER

EVEN A DECENT, HONEST GAMER CAN BE TEMPTED BY THE LURE OF HIGH SCORES...

To cheat or not to cheat. That really is the question, especially now when the temptation to turn to the dark side has never been stronger. Many players feel that, in order to compete these days, or even just to enjoy online gaming, there is only one thing to do: cheat themselves.

"I would never have considered myself a cheater," says 'Michael', a 28-year-old long time Quake and Counter-Strike player. "In fact, I hate cheaters. But with everyone doing it, I felt I had no choice. It was actually more fun to play with a cheat. I didn't turn on all the features. Just the wall-hack. So I still had to be skillful to survive." But there was one unexpected side-effect. "I could now see who else was wallhacking by the way they aimed when I watched from their viewpoint. I would often start accusing them to distract attention from me. I know it's bad but ultimately it doesn't matter, does it? It's just a game."

creation, Metacheat, is currently in beta. He's coded it with his teenage sidekick, Stoner4Life. He doesn't know if he actually smokes cannabis: "I know nothing about him apart from his name. He knows nothing about me. And that's fine." Anonymity is a good thing when you're in this game.

Metacheat sports the fastest, most accurate aimbot yet, and it's coded in Microsoft's .net so anyone can add plugins to it. He knows cheaters will download it by the thousand. He doesn't care.

'Personally, I don't use the cheat that often. I'm all right without it. Depends how I'm feeling at the weekend. Some days I'll just feel like going around annoying the hell out of people."

THE ANTI-CHEAT COLLECTIVE

Angry, jaded, and purple from holding their breath waiting for games publishers to take credible action, many players have taken things into their own hands. Players have self-organised, forming collectives, often with radically different approaches and techniques, to take on the hax0rs and restore order to the gaming scene.

United Admins (www.unitedadmins. com) for example, is one such group of Half-Life players. Highly efficient and dedicated, they've become a sort of gaming CIA, co-ordinating worldwide action against cheaters, and producing a you use cheats', but: 'we do not want you to use this program on our servers."

They've even enticed cheaters like Joolz into their ranks. Sometimes this works. In Joolz case, it didn't, "The problem was, that they never opened up in terms of trusting me," he says. "There was no trust. I didn't feel respected. I got bored and went straight back to cheating again," says Joolz.

"The majority of cheat-writers appear to have over-inflated egos and release their cheats to the public and sit back to await the admiration of the great unwashed." So says Rob Miles, veteran gamer and head of The Cheat Police (www.thecheatpolice.com). His site is a loose confederation of players who make citizen's arrests of cheaters, naming and shaming them in public forums. "Chi Verace Durrera" - "who is truthful will endure" is their motto. The Cheat Police has thousands of members and is growing in reputation.

For Rob, the issue is personal, "For those who spend any amount of time gaming online, cheating is much akin to being burgled and having your most personal and treasured possessions stolen," he says. Rob himself petitioned EA to do something about cheaters in his favourite game, Medal of Honor. They told him to reinstall the game. "That was not going to address the issue of cheating."

"The majority of cheat writers appear to have over-inflated egos and crave the admiration of the great unwashed"

ROB MILES THE CHEAT POLICE

raft of software to tackle the threat. Notably they developed the muchrespected anti-cheat app, Cheating-Death. With divisions called 'Infiltrator' and 'Vigilance' they are scarily reminiscent of a punitive right-wing intelligence agency. However, their message is one of conciliation.

"Many admins consider cheaters to be scum," says their spokesperson, Vampire. "They run around shouting their heads off and getting mad. Cheating is considered some kind or crime, or a mortal sin or even a disease... as if it was some kind of character flaw that caused people to cheat. The better solution will always be not to say: 'we don't dislike you because

Another key figure on the anti-cheat side is Tony Ray. A staunch Christian, he's the creator of commercial anti-cheat system, Punkbuster. He has one opinion of cheaters: "punks". He has one stance: "zero tolerance". And one mantra: "CHEATING DESTROYS!"

"In all facets of life, cheating is recognised as destructive behaviour," he says. "The worst cheaters are the evil people who are only happy when they cause ruin for others - like the punks who commit crimes under the cover of darkness: from knocking over mailboxes to setting fires."

Not any more. Originally developed for Half-Life (but later discontinued when



X-Ray eyes: Deluxe wallhack in operation.

Valve refused to support it) Punkbuster has now established itself as the leading anti-cheat technology. It works like a virus-checker, scanning for known hacks. Admins can even remotely screen grab a suspect's screen.

Ray is out to catch as many cheaters as possible. He has an undercover research team that infiltrates cheater communities and passes intelligence back to the company. Honest players and admins are invited to grass on any cheaters they find.

"The anonymity of the Internet gives cheaters a feeling of security, like they are getting away with something. If cheating s easy to get away with, then more and more people will try."

Punkbuster certainly seems the most effective defence system yet. Return To Castle Wolfenstein, Soldier Of Fortune, and America's Army are all steel-fenced by the system and have seen significantly reduced cheater activity. More will follow.

Being anti-cheat can make you very unpopular. United Admins, for instance, are almost continually mailbombed. Their website has been hacked so many times

the FBI have been called in to investigate. But the admins are unruffled.

"I picked a side." says their anti-cheat co-ordinator, Australian 2SX. "I'd rather be doing something good for the community than trying to bring it down."

THE PUBLISHERS

"One vice president of a top publisher told me directly that they believe it is in their hest interest to let the cheating destroy a game so the players will get mad and move on to their next title," says Punkbuster's Tony Ray, highlighting the suspicions of many gamers who feel publishers have done little to counter the threat of cheats. The Cheat Police's Rob Miles also feels that aging games like Medal of Honor have been "abandoned" by publishers like EA.

This is certainly not the case," says Matt Powers, senior producer on Medal Of Honor. "We are well aware of cheating, and trying to prevent it is an important task for us. We are looking into a variety of different methods to curb cheating. both using other people's anti-cheat products and solutions we are hoping to see implemented ourselves.

HOW TO SPOT A CHEAT

IT'S VERY DIFFICULT TO DISTINGUISH A HAXOR FROM A REALLY GOOD PLAYER, BUT HERE ARE SOME TIPS.

- You have -1 kills. They have 803.
- Despite a professed habit for co-ordination-impairing intoxicants as expressed in their nickname - Stoner4Life, SkunkWeEd2003, ZammoFromGr@ngeHill - they still show a remarkable ability with a railgun.
- Seemingly fearless activities running headlong into a room full of opponents with a pistol, taking on 16 opponents with a knife, etc.
- Abrupt "gtg" and log-off when you say you're going to get an admin.
- When accused of cheating respond with any of the following stock reactions: Obvious cheater: "F*** you noobie lamers. You just got no skillz. I'm not cheating." Obvious cheater: "How do you know I'm cheating?"
- Obvious cheater: "No I'm not. Just ask [other player also on server with suspiciously identical pingl."
- Other player: "I knowz him. He's doesn't use hax."
- Obvious cheater: "See?"

No doubt there has been a reluctance cheating are common. Many, like EA, plan on the part of publishers to wade in. Money is clearly an issue. Anti-cheat systems cost. To be fully effective they need to be integrated at the developer

headache for any developer. And those who do take on the cheater kids risk embroiling themselves in a war without end. Two years ago Valve initiated its VAC (Valve Anti Cheat) defeat Half-Life cheaters. Today the battle still wages, and with Valve constantly and firmly on the back foot. As Joolz puts it: "What takes me five hours to code takes them two

level (as id has now done with Quake III).

a serious money-time-resources

swinging towards the good guys. In the

weeks to counteract." However, the pendulum seems to be face of rising dissent from players, some publishers are taking

action. Automatic

five year or even

life bans for

to appoint 24-hour admins to police servers. Anti-cheating is on the agenda.

THE FUTURE

Whether these punitive measures will mollify the community and reverse the deep paranoia remains to be seen. But as the War on Cheats still rages, there is one thing cheaters and anti-cheaters both agree on: cheating is unlikely to go away.

"There is no absolute stopping all cheats," says United Admin's Vampire.

"I don't think there will ever be a 100 per cent cheat-free game," says arch cheat coder System.

"As long as we use Windows - no." says Joolz. "Absolutely not."

'Games will never be cheat-free until society is crime-free," says Punkbuster's Tony Ray. "As long as bad people think they can get away with doing bad things, they'll try - and some will succeed."

But perhaps Battlefield 1942 producer Ken Balthaser sums it up best: "It will be an ongoing battle and I'm not sure you are ever going to eradicate it completely. As the online genre matures, developers and publishers continue to invest time and money into developing technologies that will lock out or prevent cheating... But those hackers out there will always find a way..."

ANTI-CHEAT LINKS

www.thecheatpolice.com www.punksbusted.com www.counter-hack.net www.unitedadmins.com

HAVE YOUR SAY

What do you think of cheating? Is it inevitable? Have you ever used a cheat? Log on to the forums at www.pczone.co.uk, look for the thread 'War on Cheats' and vent some spleen...



International bright young thir

EMPIRES: DAWN OF THE MODERN WORLD Keith Pullin locks horns with the Godfather of historical

Keith Pullin locks horns with the Godfather of historical real-time strategy in this exclusive full playtest

THE DETAILS

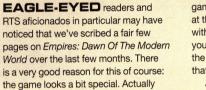
DEVELOPER Stainless Steel Studios
PUBLISHER Activision
WERSITE

www.stainlesssteelstudios.com

ETA Christmas 2003

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- The new RTS from Rick Goodman, designer of Age Of Empires and Empire Earth
- Intuitive 1-click upgrade interface
- Crazy never-seen-before units
 Could set a new benchmark in use of sound in an RTS
- Loads of civs and they all play very differently



is a very good reason for this of course: the game looks a bit special. Actually that's not entirely accurate. After spending a day playing the game to death, what we originally thought was a bit special has now become tastier than dinner at the Ritz with Kelly Brook.

Stainless Steel Studios' follow-up to

Empire Earth just keeps impressing us more and more. As the game charges towards its Christmas release date, it seems every time we see it, some major new feature has been added. This month is no exception, and our grim Monday morning sojourn to Activision's Slough headquarters soon brightened up when Empires' lead designer and president of Stainless Steel Studios Rick Goodman introduced us to the French and

Russians, the two new civilisations the team had just put the finishing touches on. So, add those to the English, Germans, Koreans, Chinese and Americans and it seems we're going to be in for one hell of a scuffle.

NO PRISONERS

Incredibly, when you consider the game still has around five months of development remaining, we were also privileged to have a crack at the multiplayer game to really see how all these cultures kicked off against each other.

Now, when you first sit down to have a bit of a session and you peer over the top of your monitor to find Mr Goodman, arguably one of the most influential game designers in the world, sitting at the terminal opposite you, grinning with a demonic look in his eyes – and you're about to take him on at his game, the game he made – you get the feeling that maybe today won't be your day.

An hour later, after one of the most enjoyable skirmishes we've ever had, only one civilisation was left standing – the proud English troops of PC ZONE, looking slightly taken aback at their unexpected victory. "I told you battlefield surgeons were useful..." muttered a none-too-chuffed Rick Goodman through gritted teeth.

In hindsight, accidentally creating 20 battlefield surgeons (a unique English unit) instead of 20 harquebusiers probably was a major factor in our victory. This determined army of doctors marched across the battlefield with a few soldiers and priests healing the wounded, resurrecting the dead and converting the enemy so effectively our force actually increased in size as we went deeper and deeper into enemy territory. Eventually there were 10 surgeons healing one soldier – if only the NHS was that effective.

Our triumph also left us in no doubt that Goodman was going easy on us. After all, there's no sense in sending a miserable games journalist home with no idea how the game works because he's just had his ego blown to pieces. [Oh shut up, you know you kicked his ass –Ed.]

"Empires is so intuitive in the way it plays, it takes about five minutes to get the hang of"



Lambs to the slaughter.



STAINLESS STEEL STUDIOS

Established in 1999 by **Age Of Empires** mastermind Rick Goodman, Stainless Steel is based in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

2002 The company's first title, *Empire Earth* was a huge hit and spawned an add-on pack, *The Art Of War* later in the year.

2003 Empires: Dawn Of The Modern World planned for release

2004 The world waits with bated breath to see if its next game will include the word 'Empire' in some shape or form.

32 PCZONE





Everyone's done a little bit of apple scrumping in their time - but trust the Nazis to take it to extremes.

And yet, there is another reason why we held our own so comprehensively. *Empires* is so intuitive in the way it plays, it takes about five minutes to get the hang of. This is a game where 1,000 years of history is condensed into a few precise mouse clicks and what's more it's a pleasure to play.

If you've had any experience at all with RTS games you'll instinctively know which building to construct where, how many subjects you should have gathering wood, gold, stone and food, and more importantly where to place your defensive towers and how many troops it will take to guard it all.

ONE FOR ALL

Put simply *Empires* has one of the best interfaces we have ever seen. The one-click technology we told you about in issue 128 instantly brings into play special abilities and upgrades the moment they're available. So, unlike other games of this type where you waste precious time pissing about searching through submenus and clicking on buildings to find the upgrade you want, here, all the important upgrades and add-ons are virtually shoved up your nose so that you can't really avoid them.



I'd skip church this morning if I were you Madame.

Sometimes, in dire battlefield situations, when you're pinned down in your bunker, getting hammered by naval artillery, blitzed by high flying planes and down to your last few mortally wounded infantry, it's this one-click feature that saves your sorry arse.

"Air, land and sea combat are very important parts of the game," confirms Rick, "that's what players say they really

want in an historical strategy game, particularly in World War II. And so we've given them that and at the same time made it really easy to play."

We couldn't agree more – we lost count of the amount of times the French "Esprit de Corps" ability healed all our units and saved us from certain death, or the English "RAF" boost gave us the edge over the German Luftwaffe. Ultimately, when Empires is finally released, we have every reason to believe that despite the game's epic proportions you'll be gliding around the interface with the elegance of a supermodel on a Milan catwalk.

THE CULTURE IN ME

But let's get back to the civilisations for a moment. There are plenty of RTSs boasting multiple cultures that are all supposedly different. Occasionally, as with Rise Of Nations this claim is completely true – but generally all is not as it seems. A unique graphics set does not equal unique gameplay. Empires is different though.

A&D

RICK GOODMAN



Seeing as he's a keen student of bizarre cultures we thought we'd ask Rick, president of Stainless Steel Studios, what he thought of the little island known as England

PCZ So, what do you think of the English culture?

RG It's great here. I had a look around The London Dungeons the other day and have to say it was really interesting and a bit gruesome.

PCZ Did you see the water torture bit? Maybe you could incorporate that into a future game?

RG I did see that – it's not very pleasant is it? I'm not sure if it would work in a game though.

PCZ What surprises you most about England?

RG Well, at the moment it's how late it gets dark. We were out last night and it didn't get dark until gone 10 o'clock. That was surprising – I thought it got dark much earlier.

PCZ How does London compare to Boston?

RG Well, Boston is one of the most historic places in the United States; we have maybe 200 years of history there. As you wander around the streets you can really feel it too. Then you come here and you sense thousands of years of history and you suddenly realise Boston is not that old at all.

PCZ What other English things have you done while you've been here?

RG We went to the War Rooms the other day. It was fascinating to be in the very place where Churchill masterminded the British war effort against the Nazis.

PCZ What other places are you going to in your promotional tour of Europe?
RG This afternoon we're off to Milan and I'm looking forward to it a lot.

PCZ Well, have a good time, say hello to Posh and remember to take in a fashion show.

RG Um... sure.

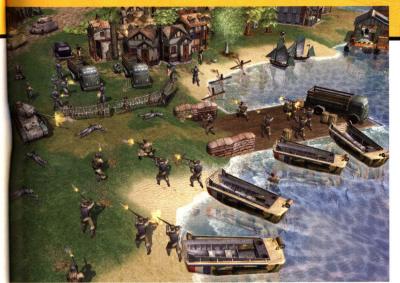


Why Don't You?...

WHAT WOULD WE PUT IN THE GAME GIVEN THE CHANCE? A LITTLE SOMETHING WE CALL FOLIAGE RESISTANCE SIMULATION...

One of the great things about *Empires* is the amount of graphical detail. We especially like the way there are loads of different tree species and this got us thinking. Why not have units move at different speeds depending on what type of foliage they are passing through? Thick, bushy areas for example should slow your units down more than walking past sparse pine trees. OK, it's only a little thing, but when we asked Rick what he thought of it, he admitted that: "actually, that's a good idea."

We shall wait and see what happens...



Special Forces try in vain to infiltrate the German frontline.



If anyone can get through the German defence it's the English bombers.



Early on in history the Chinese make fairly good sailors.

Firstly, yes – as you can see each nation does have a distinct graphical style. And to be perfectly honest, after watching all the units move and interact with the background, the game is visually much, much better than we originally thought. The landscapes are extremely detailed, with waves rolling in off the sea and there are some particularly detailed and spectacular explosions to protect your eyes from. If you want to see the full,

unbridled effects of a German World War II aerial bombardment of a small French village (which incidentally includes numerous barbecued cows flying through the air) you've come to the right place.

But, as we were saying, the difference between the cultures is significant. Each culture has a bunch of unique units, special abilities, resource needs and economic advantages and disadvantages, all designed with fun

AGE AND BEAUTY

WHAT AND WHO WILL YOU BE DEALING WITH? HERE'S A RUNDOWN OF EMPIRES' EPOCHS.

- 950 - 1300AD MEDIEVAL AGE

This age was dominated by intense land battles most notably between the two sworn enemies of France and England. Bowmen, heavy infantry and cavalry are crucial to both sides. Watch out too for disease-ridden cattle being launched through the air by Trebuchets and the odd sticky patch of boiling oil.

1300 - 1600AD GUNPOWDER AGE

With the dawn of the Gunpowder Age, every culture found its potential to damage its enemies had greatly increased. The Chinese are particularly handy in this age, with fireworks that turn out to be more than just a pretty show.

1600 - 1900AD IMPERIAL AGE

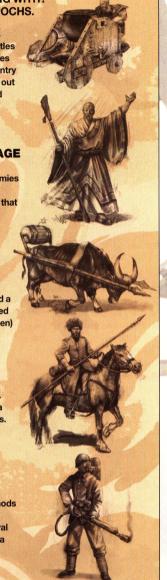
Napoleon was the classic Imperialist but his quest to conquer Europe eventually failed – probably because he was too small and his horse kept sitting on him. Technology offered a new angle of attack though and this combined with the effectiveness of gunpowder (and oxen) made for an explosive epoch.

- 1900 - 1935AD WORLD WAR I

The Germans began this era as an almighty force, but by 1918 the country was bankrupt. Russia sensed her chance and emerged as a dominant power along with the United States. Aeroplanes begin to dominate the skies and with them a surge of industrialisation and awesome new weapons.

1935 - 1950 WORLD WAR II

The dawn of the atomic age means old methods of warfare are replaced by new modern technology. Planes, tanks and awesome naval armadas dominate the battlefield with Russia and United States wrestling the ascendancy from Furone.



"Empires is acoustically one of the most amazing games we've ever heard"

firmly in mind. Touches like the English swordsman holding his shield above his head to deflect arrows, the French disguising themselves as trees, and the Chinese sending scouts into the skies on kites hundreds of years before anyone else thought about flying are just some of the myriad ideas the game offers.

ECHOES OF WAR

Each nation sounds totally different as well. In issue 130 we talked about some of the accents and how they fit perfectly into the underlying Monty Python vibe. What we didn't mention then was how you can distinctly tell the difference between the sound of a shell from a Russian T-34 tank and artillery fire from an English howitzer. There are even multiple sound effects for houses and buildings being flattened. When we put it to Rick that *Empires* is

acoustically one of the most amazing games we've ever heard, his modest reply of: "I think the sound guys have about two or three different sound effects for things like buildings being hit," doesn't really do justice to what is in our opinion a milestone in PC sound.

Empires may well prove to be a benchmark in other aspects too – and we're talking specifically about its obsession with history. But before you doze off for ten minutes can we just say that this is history with a difference. Historical accuracy doesn't mean being bored shitless, a fact that is easily illustrated with the Russian Commissar unit.

If you get this unit to shoot one of your own grunts in the back of the head, the horror of it spurs the rest of your pitiful group into action. They will fight



You can almost hear the clippity-clop of hooves.

harder, run faster and be less prone to sprinting off into the snowy Russian wilderness never to be seen again. The scary thing is this kind of behaviour was rife among the Russian forces fighting the advancing Germans in 1943. Russian casualties inflicted by other Russians ran into hundreds of thousands. That Stainless Steel has the balls to introduce this shocking tactic into its game while retaining a sense of enjoyment is remarkable.

Other less shocking yet equally accurate observations include details such as the T-34 being about the only vehicle that is a match for the German Panzer tank. Even obscure things such as the fact that the Russian's were the only nation to have a flamethrower tank (the KV8) during World War II make it into the game. There's certainly a resemblance to Sudden Strike or Blitzkrieg in terms of

technical accuracy and you can't help feeling that's going to attract some real serious hardcore strategists as well as casual, fun-loving, RTS gamers.

GET OUT OF HERE

On the other hand, Empires contains so much humour and imagination it's virtually impossible to believe that some of the stuff is based on fact.

Take the Chinese for example. On the surface it's hard for your regular cynical westerner to accept that back in 1000AD Taoist Sorcerers actually fought in battle alongside regular Chinese troops. It would be harder still to believe that these guys could freeze armies or cause volcanoes to instantly erupt spewing forth rocks, lava and hot ash. So intense was the mystery and awe surrounding these Taoist individuals that books chronicling the failed attempts of the Japanese and



The Chinese Battle elephant is a powerful beast.



The Chinese attack a bustling Korean village.

"There's certainly a resemblance to Sudden Strike or Blitzkrieg in terms of technical accuracy"

Koreans to invade China actually describe soldiers 'turning to stone' when faced by this arcane enemy.

Sure, our Japanese and Korean friends may have been slightly dazed and confused after their resounding defeat, but in *Empires*, China's alchemy and ability to manipulate the world around them is nonetheless unrivalled.

In fact, in another multiplayer game (against less agile opponents than Rick Goodman), we had great fun giving birth to an army of sorcerers and setting them loose in a French town to practice their volcano creating abilities. Sadly we forgot to tell our reconnaissance units in their kites to bugger off first, so although watching peasants running around in flames is a joy to behold, the

burning Chinese

scouts tumbling out of the sky ruined the party somewhat.

FIRST DAY OF CHRISTMAS

And that's pretty much the strength of it. With any luck the next time we play the game will be for an exclusive review. Certainly from what we've played, we can't see any reason why it shouldn't make its pre-Christmas release date.

Indeed, the version we have fallen so helplessly in love with is undoubtedly better than some finished games we've played. But we'll wait and see. Strange things have been known to happen on the way to the CD duplicators. At the last minute Rick might turn around after

reading a manual about obscure
Grecian battlefield tactics
and decide that he wants to
include an exploding olive tree.
Honestly Rick, you've got to
lay off those history books.

HISTORY CHANNEL

FEEL THE URGE TO MAKE AN HISTORICAL DOCUMENTARY? NOW'S YOUR CHANCE...

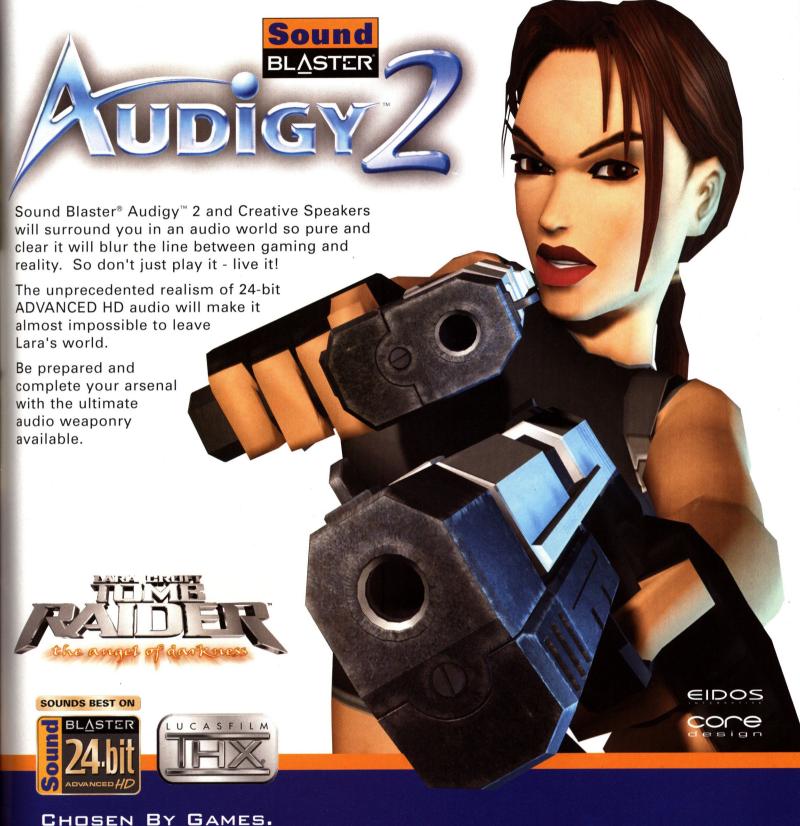
One aspect of the game that should prove popular with the more demanding gamer is the level designing tool. We were shown a brief demo of the kind of scenarios you can create yourself and it's clever stuff. Users can even create cut-scenes with the actual in-game engine where they can manipulate everything from the speed and angle of the panning camera to the actual words that are spoken.

That's right; if you have access to a microphone you can actually record your own voice into a home-grown mod and then distribute it on the Internet. You never know, it could be the start of a lucrative new career...



"On my command... run like hell."

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Things to do when you're Dredd.... JUDGE DREDD: DREDD VS DEATH

Judgement day draws near as Rebellion readies its first 2000AD game.

Richie Shoemaker takes a train to Mega City Oxford for an exclusive hands-on

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Rebellion
PUBLISHER NDA Games
WEBSITE www.rebellion.co.uk
ETA September

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Duh... it's Judge Dredd
- It's nearly finished, and we've played it!
- Freedom to explore, and the scope to arrest anyone who breaks the law
- No two games should play alike
- More multiplayer options than you can shake a Lawrod at

CV



REBELLION

With studios in Oxford, London and Birmingham, and boasting more than a decade in the games industry, Rebellion is one of the UK's biggest and best-known developers.

1994 Aliens Vs Predator is released for the Atari Jaguar

1999 Aliens Vs Predator makes a successful transition to PC

2000 Gunlok released for PC. Rebellion buys up 2000AD, thereby acquiring a huge catalogue of characters just begging to be made into games

2003 Dredd Vs Death

THERE'S A cocksure attitude about the Rebellion boys, as if they know something we don't. What with us Brits being generally a nervous and highly-strung bunch, such obvious and relaxed confidence is not something you see very often when you visit a UK games studio – not in my experience anyway. And yet Rebellion co-founder Chris Kingsley and producer Ed Woolf appear unaccustomedly fresh-faced and unconcerned. With *Dredd Vs Death* so close to release, it's slightly unnerving to see the duo evidently without crease or worry.

Either they're goosed to the eyeballs on speedballs and gin, or development on their first proper 2000AD game is going exactly to plan. Since the lads have yet to try out their newfound powers of flight by jumping out the nearest window, the latter would appear to be closer to the truth.

By rights, of course, Rebellion should be very worried indeed, as the experience of other developers does not bode well. The history books will tell that despite having such an incredibly rich and vast archive of material to draw on, not one developer has managed to do justice to Judge Dredd or his supporting cast over the last two decades.

"It's only really been with the advent of powerful PCs and the current generation of consoles that we've been able to realise our goal of recreating Mega City One," offers Ed Woolf. "The environments in the city are huge and we've built vast areas of Mega City One crammed with citizens, gangs, flying vehicles and robots – you name it."

"Judge Dredd may be the face of the game," adds Chris, "but Mega City One is the real star of the show, and bringing such a vast city to life has simply been impossible up until now."

STREETS OF SIN CITY

It is true, Mega City One is enormous just ask anyone who's read a copy of 2000AD. Stretching across the entire east coast of the USA, it's a vast megalopolis that extends upwards from the dark and disused depths of the old New York Subway, hundreds of feet into the sky where the Grand Halls





Judges can only carry two weapons at any one time.

Of Justice building dwarfs the old Statue Of Liberty. Shopping malls the size of entire suburbs command the expressways, while City Blocks - each one a self-contained city in its own right, house millions of unemployed, dissatisfied and easily led citizens.

Imprisoned in a city where littering, dancing and eating real meat warrant custodial sentences, it's no surprise things kick off as often as they do.

Unsurprisingly, with such a vast area - difficult enough to visualise in one's mind, let alone through a less capable computer - Rebellion have had to be very selective in the areas they chose to include.

"We've picked locations that would appeal to the fans," admits Ed, "although with more than 25 years of Judge Dredd history to pore over, we've had a wealth of choices. But the Undercity is there, as is the Nixon Iso-Cube Penitentiary where rioting is taking place. And Resyk - a place where dead bodies are taken to so they can be recycled for the rest of the city.

"The idea is that what you can't visit in the game, you will at least be able to see," adds Chris. "This isn't Grand Theft Auto in Mega City One - the place is just too big. What we wanted was to include the landmarks that people will want to see, with whole areas, like Ryder Megamall and of course Deadworld, available to explore in great detail."

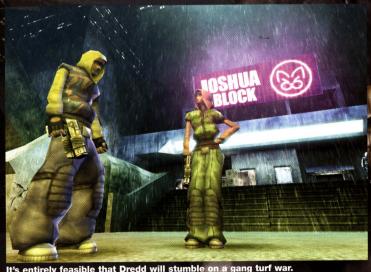
JUDGE WITH A GRUDGE

Deadworld will of course play host to the game's climax: Dredd's showdown with Judge Death in his own backyard. It's a city sentenced to eternal decay by the Dark Judges, a gruesome foursome who have made regular trips to Mega City One over the last quarter century to impose their own brand of warped justice. The slight problem Dredd has when trying to bring in the Dark Judges is that since they are dead, he can't kill them No doubt he will have to draft in some help from his trusty sidekick Judge Anderson

We've created our own unique story which involves the main characters from the comics - so Hershey and Psi Judge Anderson for example are there. But you don't have to be a 2000AD fan to get the plot. It's quite an intense dark story that evolves as you play, as Dredd responds to the madness and mayhem created from

"Judge Dredd is the face of the game, but Mega City One is the real star of the show"

CHRIS KINGSLEY
CO-FOUNDER, REBELLION GAMES



It's entirely feasible that Dredd will stumble on a gang turf war.



Why Don't You?...

WHAT PC ZONE REALLY WANTS TO SEE IN A DREDD GAME...

Rebellion is making every effort to make the game true to the Dredd tradition, but there are a few things we would really like to see added to the mix. The number one thing most fans would welcome is of course Dredd's Lawmaster bike (and indeed Rebellion admits they wanted to include this). The super high-powered chopper isn't just the preferred mode of transport for a Mega City Judge, it's a two-wheeled weapon stockpile and mobile office, with ammunition stores, on-board computer, scattergun, and of course the Cyclops TX laser cannon.

However, something we're more concerned

about is that Dredd always has his weapon drawn and has to rely on it for everything, just like any other FPS hero. What we'd really like to see is Dredd kicking in doors with his trademark boots or grabbing perps by the throat with his gloved fists – basically showing the force of authority you'd expect.

Perhaps Rebellion should introduce a 'Dredd Stance' option – press a key and Dredd takes a deep breath, puts his hands on his manly hips and booms "I am the law". An unearthly silence would settle, after which the perps would drop their weapons, piss themselves and run like screaming girls. Not very FPS perhaps, but very Dredd.

The Lawmaster bike is sadly absent.

the escape of the Dark Judges which are initially being held in their ethereal ghostly form in the Nixon Penitentiary. Of course, to be able to spread their carnage effectively, they need physical bodies. At the end of the game, Judge Death does manage to inhabit a particularly insane body, but I'm not allowed to tell you more..."

CRIMEWATCH Tight security means we will probably

have to wait until the review to see how the Dark Judges look in 3D, but it only took a few moments running the streets of Mega City One to recognise a legion of other potential enemies. From simple street perps all the way up to

organised and heavily armed gangs – Mega City One's criminal population isn't going to give you a day off just because you're investigating a plot to free Judge Death. As we patrolled a typical street, we saw a vast number of crimes underway, from illicit smoking, littering, wall tagging – all the way up to

muggings and assaults, and even a full-blown bank robbery. The beauty is that it's entirely up to you whether to ignore the perps or apprehend them.

"There are a multitude of ways of getting people to surrender," says Ed. "You can sneak up behind them and point a gun in their back, or shoot the

gun out of their hands or apprehend the ringleader. If you can affect their morale, they are also more likely to surrender. However, if they have friends around, you may suddenly find yourself in the midst of a huge gun battle, at which point you can return fire legally."

olo or co-operatively.

LAW OF THE URBAN JUNGLE

This is the catch - as well as upholding the law, Dredd must keep within it himself. Needless to say, the first thing we did was to unnecessarily execute a few passers-by, then some captured crims, and some more onlookers; behaviour that pretty soon incurred the wrath of the Special Judges. Flying down out of the sky in their H-Wagons, they did their best to arrest us, and we were forced to scarper. To avoid getting into this sort of trouble, you have to keep your Law Meter in the black, for which you're eventually rewarded with special arcade modes and multiplayer skins. GTA it isn't, but

ROGUE BLOOPER



Will Rogue Trooper be next?

WHAT'S BECOME OF THE OTHER 2000AD HEROES?

There will be 12 chapters that make up the Story Mode,

As all good 2000AD fans will recall, there was talk of a Rogue Trooper game a couple of years ago – we even saw a couple of pieces of concept art. But since VU Games signed up *Dredd Vs Death*, details on my favourite 2000AD character's transferral to PC have been non-existent. Does the planned third-person action title still exist?

"To be honest, we have so many characters to choose from, we've decided to see how Dredd fares before we decide who next to bring to the screen," says Rebellion's Chris Kingsley. "Rogue is an obvious choice, but people are equally keen to see Slaine, Johnny Alpha and Halo Jones. It's an almost impossible choice."

Curiously, the team is more ready to discuss a Dredd sequel... "But again, who should we have as Dredd's rival?" asks Chris. "Over the last 25 years Dredd has dispatched dozens and dozens of memorable characters... it's a nightmare." Reading all those old Progs again, yep, it must be a horrendous task.



A 'Making Of' Dredd Vs Death book is planned for release in September, if you're interested.



Against a lone Judge, even the most cowardly perps will stand and fight.

Dredd Vs Death will still offer plenty of scope for players to do their own thing outside the remit of the main story.

"If you explore every nook and cranny of the city," adds Ed, "you'll uncover secondary objectives which you can choose to fulfil if you want to see absolutely everything the game has to offer."

Aside from setting and story, the two most important aspects of any first-person shooter are the graphics and Al. It's hard to gauge an unfinished game after just a few hours play, but it appears Rebellion's claims that its Al system "responds to eve nts occurring around it, rather than having scripted linear events" is not unfounded. Take out a gang leader and his followers will flee. Or they may not, depending on the situation they find themselves in. Against a lone Judge they might stand and fight, against a squad they quickly give up or display suicidal tendencies. We played through the same situation three times, each time the Al reacted in noticeably different ways.

The 3D engine itself is undoubtedly powerful, for aside from all the buildings, backdrops and vehicles buzzing about, it's not uncommon to see over a dozen characters on screen at any time. And while this may not seem like an awfully large number, it's a good few more than most 3D engines can handle.

LIVING (RAG)DOLL

Ragdoll physics, the latest must-have shooter feature, will provide much of the game's appeal. Launch a round of Hi-Ex into a pack of zombies and they fly across the room, legs and arms flailing wildly in true comic-book style, coming to rest in a crumpled heap of broken bones and sagging flesh, with no evidence of clipping to be seen. What impressed us most of all was seeing a Fatty waddling across the street, his bellywheel squeaking underneath the strain of his enorm gut. If you thought the ladies in DOA Beach Volleyball had impressive norks, wait 'til you see a Fatty on the move.

"If you explore every neak and cranny ou'll uncover secondary objectives"

ED WOOLF PRODUCER, REBE ON GAMES

It is, as Chris revealed, close to the end of development for Dredd Vs Death, a time when typically a games developer is a hive of frenzied activity, as bug reports pour out from printers and tired bodies slump to the ground through exhaustion. However, there is no such panic here. A wander around the offices of the Oxford studio reveals that the troops are as relaxed about the whole thing as the generals. Bodies are washed and alert, screens appear busy, and sleeping bags are nowhere to be seen. Had I not seen and played the very latest, near beta, version of the game for myself, I might have come away thinking Dredd Vs Death was barely at the planning stage.

I left Rebellion's eerily quiet and efficient offices a few hours later, satisfied I had seen what is sure to be – though it's hardly saying much – the best 2000AD-inspired game in the comic's 25-year history. If Rebellion's collective and understated reassurances are anything to go by, few will be disappointed.

A&Q

CHRIS KINGSLEY

Rebellion's co-founder Chris Kingsley lays down the law...

PCZ How have 2000AD's fans reacted to the game's development?

CK So far the fans that have seen it love it – we've had a tremendously positive response as I think we really have come close to capturing what it must be like to live in such a bustling futuristic city.

PCZ How much pressure is there on you to get this game right? Surely, if Rebellion can't do it, no one can?

CK Rebellion has a history of creating top quality games, including the critically acclaimed Aliens Vs Predator. Given that we bought 2000AD and are also huge Dredd fans, I would say that there has been a concerted effort within the company to do this game and the whole licence justice.

PCZ If there was one feature that you could slip into the game before release, what would it be?

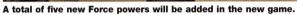
CK I'm quite happy with what we've managed to get into the game. That said, I guess it would have been great to be able to ride Judge Dredd's Lawmaster bike around. Maybe we'll get a chance to do that in the seguel.

PCZ What's the 2000AD character/
storyline you'd most like to see on PC?
CK Well, I have always had a soft spot
for Chopper the Skysurfer. It would
be great to surf around Mega City
One evading the Judges and racing
against other people.











THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Raven
PUBLISHER Activision
WEBSITE www.lucasarts.com
ETA September

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Jedi Outcast was a PC ZONE

 Classic and Academy promises
 to be even better
- Create your own character and specialise in different styles of saber combat
- More Force powers and added special moves
- Non-linear mission structure and two different endings

CV

RAVEN SOFTWARE

Developer of Hexen, Heretic, Soldier Of Fortune and Elite Force, plus their sequels, not to mention last year's Jedi Outcast and a fourth Quake game, Raven has made quite a name for itself over the years. Here are some other efforts that you may not be so familiar with.

1993 Shadowcaster was a decent enough
3D fantasy game at the time, though
not a patch on either Elder Scrolls Arena
or Ultima Underworld

1994 Next to Raven's own Heretic (released the same year), Cyclones was a run-of-the-mill sci-fi FPS

1996 Necrodome. A futuristic spin on Destruction Derby, only with guns mounted on cars. And you could get out of the cars and run around on foot

1997 Interesting use of the Quake engine in both Take No Prisoners and Mageslayer – both Gauntlet-inspired action games using a top-down view

You are not a Jedi yet...

JEDI KRIGHT

Richie Shoemaker Jedi mind-tricks his way into Raven HQ for an exclusive hands-on with the latest Star Wars shooter

"WHEN 900 years-old you reach, look as good you will not", so said a terminally ill Master Yoda. As we now know, he was of course discussing the merits of the venerable *Quake III* engine, which is being dusted off once more for Raven's second *Star Wars* outing, *Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy*. And despite the years, the old *QIII* workhorse (now rivalling Jacko for number of facelifts) is still looking surprisingly capable. Indeed, having played the game extensively, we think it might be the best *Jedi* game yet.

Despite the lack of numerical evidence in the title, *Jedi Academy* is the

chronological sequel to last year's Jedi Outcast, one of the most frustrating action games I've had the pleasure to review. And it was a pleasure, in spite of the formulaic running and gunning that had to be completed in the early stages, and the botched design of the game's more tedious puzzlesolving sections.

The game eventually



Shit. Who knew Greedo's little brother was a Jedi? Now we're screwed...

revealed itself to be probably the most enjoyable in the *Star Wars* lineage in terms of saber-wielding action, and it is with some relief, then, that the new game focuses even more strongly on the electrifying clash of saber on saber.

JEDI MASTER CLASS

As mentioned last issue, some other major changes are obvious even before

the adventure begins. Kyle Katarn, hero of the previous *Dark Forces/Jedi Knight* adventures is no longer heading the cast list, having been forced to take a wage cut and pass on his dubious talents as a teacher at Luke Skywalker's School of Jedism on Yavin 4. Instead, you play the game as his student, a young Padawan of undetermined heritage eager to learn the ways of the Force.





But before the first lesson begins, wannabe Jedi must first create their character, selecting from one of five races, (human, Rodian, Twi'lek, Zabrak and Kel Dor) and completing the look with a range of ready-made heads, torsos and legs.

DOUBLE PENETRATION

Next comes the selection of the ultimate accessory, with the option to choose a blade colour and hilt design for your saber – a feature that has had a few obsessive Wars devotees frothing in their trousers. Seeing as the thing will be in your hands most of the time, it baffles me why anyone should care, but then what do I know – I only watch the films.

One aspect that is worth getting heated over is the new combat styles.

MOUNT UP

NOT EVEN A JEDI WANTS TO HAVE TO LEG IT EVERYWHERE...

Jedi Academy features a new emphasis on drivable vehicles, with Tauntauns and AT-ST Scout Walkers to command. Unfortunately, only the stinky two-legged arctic camels were available to try out in our beta build. Hopping aboard is simply a case of pressing the action key when you get near one (or you could be a show-off and Force Jump onto their backs) and since no special keys are required, controlling them is simple – just rotate left and right and press forward when required.

They are hardly the most exciting beasts to control and the novelty of padding across the frozen wastes will, we fear, soon wear off. But they have a useful purpose in traversing maps quickly and they gurgle quite convincingly. You can't fight while mounted at this stage, but we're assured you will be able to once the game is complete. Instead, we tried out the Tauntaun's charge attack and bowled our way through an entire squad of Stormtroopers – which undoubtedly will be a most enjoyable way to rack up frags in the online game.



"Baby don't you Tauntaun away from me..."

"This new game focuses even more on the electrifying clash of saber on saber"





Add your own saber noises for full Star Wars effect.



And this is for beating us at rugby...

than making drastic changes, which is great news since the existing system was both simple and powerful enough to allow for some deft moves. The game now feels even closer to a beat 'em up, yet even with the keyboard/mouse combination it feels as intuitive as playing Street Fighter on an original arcade cab.

PUZZLE FIGHTER

While Outcast's levels were generally puzzle-based and largely frustrating due to their sprawling size and poor signposting, Academy's are focused, action-based affairs, with key-searching and button-pressing kept to a minimum. Battles are frequent and exciting, usually pitting you against multiple opponents, though you sometimes have the support of one or two Al teammates.

"The Darth
Maul style of
combat allows
for impressive
gymnastics
and plenty
of high kicks"

Previous Jedi outings have concentrated solely on the traditional fighting methods favoured by Vader and son, but now you can choose to specialise as a dual saberwielding berserker, or ape the moves of the acrobatic Sith lord Darth Maul with his two gaffer-taped-together sabers. Follow the traditionalists and go for the single saber option and you can effect the full range of Force powers with relative ease, even in the thick of battle. Opt to specialise with dual sabers, however, and while you can go hammer and tongs like some demented majorette, Force powers will be harder to pull off.

The Darth Maul style of combat is the more flamboyant of the three and allows for some impressive gymnastics and plenty of high kicks to knock the enemy off balance and, as before, the higher your Force level, the more special moves and attack combos you can pull off.

The control system itself is still being worked on, but it's clear Raven will be honing the *Jedi Outcast* system rather



There are many schools of Jedism, and now's your chance to learn them all.

One particularly satisfying level sees you fighting alongside Chewbacca (although I accidentally singed his fur with my lightsaber and he chased me to death for doing so) and we can expect to see quite a few other old faces turning up to lend a hand as well, including Luke Skywalker and his little sister. Scurrilous rumour has it that Ewoks are set to make an appearance, which is fine, so long as we get to poke their beady little eyes out in the multiplayer game.

Although we like to whinge when developers use yesterday's technology for their games, it may be a very fortunate decision for us that Raven has decided to go with id Software's aging 3D code, past-masters that they are at turning successive id engines into high quality action games. For one thing it means the

wait has been a short one, just over a year in fact – which when you consider we've already been forced to wait over six years for the *Duke Nukem* sequel – is quite an impressive turnaround.

For another, *Quake III*'s aging architecture can still cut the mustard, as *Elite Force II* – another Raven production – has proved. Add in all the various enhancements Raven has made through the years: Ghoull II animation, ICARUS scripting, a new terrain engine, ragdoll physics and even vehicles – and it's clear that until *Doom III*'s code goes out, *Quake III*'s will do very nicely.

On a final note, don't touch that dial, as Raven has confided to us that the game is very nearly finished, and we should be bringing you a huge exclusive review in our very next issue.



"Listen pal, you're about to feel a great disturbance in the face."

Why Don't You?...

WHAT WOULD WE DO TO IMPROVE JEDI ACADEMY? TWO WORDS: JEDI MIDGETS

I'm not much of a fan of the two recent Star Wars movies. In fact, I'd even go so far as to say that Attack of the Clones is even worse than The Phantom Menace (controversial, I know), for the sole reason that the line; "I'm going to be the most powerful Jedi ever" – delivered in perfect Kevin The Teenager style, has got to be one of the worst lines of dialogue ever written and acted. How we are supposed to believe that such a self-obsessed little tit would ever become the scourge of the galaxy is beyond my comprehension. And the fact that the entire Imperial Army turned out to be Kiwis is also faintly unnerving.

Saying that, Yoda's fight scene was a real hoot and in Jedi Academy I would dearly have loved to see the option to play as a vertically challenged muppet rather than the choice of humanoids the game offers us. Or failing that, one of those unfortunate fellows with the unfeasibly large foreheads.



colin mcrae rally 3



"The best looking and most authentic rally game ever" PC Zone



Drive as Colin McRae in a



Race against the clock - 56 stages, 8 countries, 18 licensed cars



Full environmental physics and crash damage system



21 high-performance rally cars,



The most professional pace notes in any rally game

Download the demo from www.codemasters.com







GENIUS AT PLAY

Forget the natives, it's...

MANISLANDE FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHTS

Keith Pullin plays cowboys and indians in an RTS of many faces

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Related Designs PUBLISHER CDV-WEBSITE www.nomans-land.com ETA August 2003

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- A diverse mixture of RTS styles
- Tasty full-3D engine
- Three story-driven campaigns with six main characters
- Immersive plot set amid a historical background
- Probably the first time a German developer has opted for a non-isometric viewpoint



The stunning 3D engine also has the ability to create snow, rain and fog.



Shamans are so powerful they can destroy an entire fortress.

IF SOMEONE told you German developer Related Designs was about to release a strategy game that looked as gorgeous as Age Of Mythology and played like a cross between Warcraft III and Commandos, your initial reaction would probably be: "who?" and "yeah, right."

It's hard not to be sceptical when such lofty claims are wafted about on a heady summer breeze - we certainly had our doubts - but that was before we got the preview code. Now after a weekend. befriending Native Americans, ambushing the Spanish navy and building railroads with American settlers, we can confidently state that No Man's Land: Fight For Your Rights stands every chance of ranking among the best the genre has to offer.

Granted, it may not possess the most catchiest of titles (Fight For Your Rights indeed - is this some kind of ploy to attract RTS-loving hip-hoppers?), but what it may lack in snappy subtitles, it makes up for in enterprising game design.

MYTHOLOGICAL RAILWAYS

No Man's Land covers 300 years of American history from the discovery of the New World through to the construction of the transcontinental railroad. There are three campaigns to get stuck into featuring six cultures, each boasting well over a dozen unique unit types and at least one playable 'star' personality that the story is based around.

Choose the first campaign for example, and you partake in grim territorial battles between the ruthless. all-conquering Spanish led by the brutal Carvinez and the peaceful, spiritual Indians guided by tribal leader Umak. It's fairly straightforward RTS stuff gather some wood, gold and food, before amassing a terrible army to wipe out those pilfering Spaniards.

Select the second and third scenarios and the game leaves the wilds of the South American jungle to focus on the cutthroat business of creating profitable railroad companies in the fledgling US of A. To do that successfully you need to encroach on Native American soil and that doesn't always go down too well. It's Railroad Tycoon meets Age Of Mythology. Very weird, but compelling stuff.

A BOLT FROM THE BLUE

While it's true that the game is based on historical fact, Related Designs has gone to great lengths to focus on entertainment rather than education. As MD Burkhard Ratheiser points out: "No Man's Land is historically accurate, but only aesthetically. It's not like a history book, and we certainly don't want to give gamers a lesson in American history. It's just a fictitious story set amid a historical background."

NML boasts all the natural geographical beauty of the era in full 3D, but doesn't bother with real names, dates, places and so on. Good job too, as the last thing we need is anothe deadpan period drama based on the conquest of the Americas.

This loose guide-rope also gives the developer plenty of artistic freedom; the two Native American cultures, for example, have magical abilities. Tribal shamans can call upon earthly spirits to protect them, summoning bears, wolves and other bestial guardians. They can also harness more destructive powers like fireballs. Surround a colonial fortress with a few angry shamans and those dirty land-grabbing white devils soon know what they've let themselves in for.

The Spanish and the British have their own trump card - ships. Bloody big ones, and lots of them. These cannon ball-spewing behemoths can annihilate Indian kayaks in no time and so, as a naval force, the invading Spaniards and Brits are simply untouchable.

GREAT WHITE HOPE

NML is an equal opportunities destroyer though - every culture has its advantages and disadvantages. It bodes well for the LAN/Internet multiplayer mode, and from playing it with the developers we found the balance to be pretty good. Indeed, one of the most enjoyable gameplay elements we came across was the Native Americans' unique capacity to dive into the ocean, swim down unnoticed to the underside of a galleon and then cut a hole in the hull to sabotage it. Sharks can cause a slight problem, however, and the amount of times our eager beavers became Great White lunches defies belief.

Little touches like this crop up liberally, and what's even more impressive is the

"Tribal shamans can call upon bears, wolves and other bestial guardians to protect them"



RELATED DESIGNS

Related Designs is not well known outside its native Germany, but has had plenty of success during its eight years of existence

1995 Company founded in Mainz, Germany

2000 Hardcore RTS America heralds RD's arrival in the mainstream PC market and goes on to sell 250,000 copies

2003 No Man's Land



Kayaks: good against fish, bad against galleons.



An English warship sets sail for the high seas.

way certain single player levels take on a distinctly stealthy tone. Again, the influence is there for all to see - in this mood the game is Commandos, pure and simple, something Burkhard freely admits: "In No Man's Land there's a little bit of everything!" Well, we won't argue with you there.

NML is virtually complete bar a few tweaks and hopefully we'll have the review next month. So, until then dig out all the games we've mentioned above, play them again and imagine all the best bits in one tidy little package. Now, wouldn't that would be something? See, we told you...





nmon animals and harness the power of the elements.

COUNTER PRODUCTIVE



No better way to wind up your enemies...

BUGGER UP YOUR RIVALS WITH COUNTER-UPGRADES

One of the more novel features of NML is the way you can create counter-upgrades – sneaky devices that disrupt your opponent's upgrades and production facilities. These must be researched first and can only be used by specific elite units, but can be used to devastating effect.

There is a catch, however, as if you use them in a multiplayer game they affect everybody on the map - even any allies you might have. So, before embarking upon the joys of counterupgrades, make sure you're good friends with your allies, otherwise things could get uglier than an ugly fish in a plastic sturgeon's waiting room.

Battlestar Fantastica...

MEWORLD 2

After four years in a black hole, the sequel to Canada's space masterpiece is about to dock... Veteran pilot Richie Shoemaker plots a course for prog rock heaven





Once your fighters break through to attack the defenceless mothership, it's like watching ants devour the corpse of a dying elephant.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Relic Entertainment **PUBLISHER** VU Games WEBSITE www.homeworld2.com ETA November

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's the sequel to Homeworld the definitive name in space strategy gaming
- Overhauled interface that promises. greater ease of use
- New engine capable of rendering 3D battles on a grand scale
- Built-in mod support Star Trek Vs Star Wars is only a matter of time



FAUX PROG rock crackles through my headphones and vapour trails claw across the starfield spread before me. I have sent hundreds of small fighter craft to attack a vast defenceless mothership, laser fire pouring from their cannons, the whole scene reminiscent of some computerised re-enactment of human fertilisation. Sperm flock towards egg, tails flick wildly behind - all to the strains of what sounds like an Ozric

Before you ask, no I haven't been smoking banana skins. I've been playing Homeworld 2, sequel to Relic's groundbreaking 3D RTS, for longer than common sense deems prudent. And though the version sitting on my hard drive is far from complete, there's enough to give a very good idea of what

Tentacles number. Far out, man.

to expect from the sequel to one of the finest strategy games ever devised.

GALACTIC ACID

True to plan, the aim of the game is to lead your race from the besieged home planet you fought so hard to find in the original game to salvation among the stars. It's obvious, even after a few minutes play, that Relic has put some considerable effort into telling a good story, as opposed to just ripping it from the opening titles of Battlestar Galactica. Again, the developers have opted to narrate the linear quest with their trademark sketchy cut-scenes, now

overlaid with in-engine cinematics that complement the epic tale. It's far from spectacular by today's standards, but atmospheric and unhurried nonetheless.

BEST FLEET FORWARD

But it is of course the battles that made Homeworld what it was, and in Homeworld 2 they're just as epic. Hundreds of years have passed since the original tale, so the ships are of course all new, though fulfilling much the same functions. Fighters, bombers, corvettes, frigates, destroyers and capital ships make up the bulk of your fleet, and though there are a few new

"The space battles are among the most magnificent we've ever seen"



Researching opens up new units and upgrades.



Without Resource Collectors your war effort will soon run out of juice.

A SIMPLER WORLD



STREAMLINED SYSTEMS HOPE TO BRING HOMEWORLD BACK DOWN TO EARTH

One welcome change in *Homeworld 2* is the simplification of the research process. Instead of having to build dedicated research ships as in the first game, which did little more than complicate matters, upgrades are researched from your base ship. These initially take the form of modules, then as technological upgrades that can be applied to your existing fleet of ships. This is just one of the measures Relic has taken to streamline what many gamers considered to be a horrendously overcomplicated game. Then again, *PC ZONE*'s own Paul Presley still insists the original was in fact "perfectly balanced in every way", so the changes may not be well received in every quarter...



Vagyr Interceptors make a beeline for your Mothership.

CV Frelic

RELIC ENTERTAINMENT

Born six years ago above a nightclub in Vancouver, Relic Entertainment is best known for quintessential 3D strategy eoic *Homeworld*.

1997 Alex Garden forms the company and development begins on *Homeworld*.

1998 Sierra signs up to publish Homeworld.

1999 Homeworld is released, redefining space strategy forever and going on to sell over half a million copies. A new game is revealed under the working title Sigma.

2000 Standalone semi-sequel Homeworld: Cataclysm is released by Barking Dog Studios.

2003 Sigma: Adventures Of Rex Chance, now renamed Impossible Creatures, fails to emulate the brilliance of Homeworld.

additions, the general lack of new and unique ships may come as a slight disappointment. Certainly, some of the new craft are quite cool, like the Marine Frigate that allows you to board and capture enemy carriers, but there's nothing on the scale of the biomechanical menace that was introduced in Homeworld: Cataclysm. Let's hope this changes before release.

Where the developer seems to have concentrated most of its attention is on the graphics and user interface. The crude and empty backdrops that

characterised the original game are now replaced by a universe of bright stars, distant planets and ominous gas clouds. The wrecks of long-dead ships litter the galaxy, each offering vital materials to recycle, and often a squadron of enemy interceptors ready to pounce on an unquarded Resource Collector drone.

WARP NINE

Ships offer an impressive amount of detail – the larger craft especially – but it's the sheer numbers of them that's more impressive. Watching hundreds of fighters escorting wings of bombers as they flit about an enemy Carrier, missiles streaming into the unguarded hull – well, it's probably the most impressive sight in sci-fi gaming today. Group your ships into a Strike Fleet and they can progress at the speed of the slowest ship, yet click on an enemy ship and the fastest among them will peel away, while the Missile Cruisers and Ion Frigates will pound away from a distance.

The point is that unlike the original game, you can at last appreciate the scale of the destruction you're inflicting on the enemy, rather than having to master the over-complicated controls and miss the action as a result. Sweeping your view to get a good squint is masterfully simple and though the tactical options are fewer (there's no longer the same wealth of formation options, for instance) the effects are much more pleasing.

Getting into the action is far quicker too. Smaller ships are ready-built into



Fighters and bombers stay in formation as they buzz the enemy.

pre-organised wings, so 50 fighters can be built in a matter of minutes, making it far easier to assemble a hasty defence if you see a fleet of frigates approaching your Mothership at speed.

BUFFED

On present form, it looks very much like Relic has succeeded in fixing all that was wrong with the original title, while building on the game's obvious strengths. The interface is indescribably better and more streamlined, and while perhaps not offering the wealth of tactical minutiae of *Homeworld*, it should ultimately make this version all the more enjoyable for veterans, as well as newcomers.

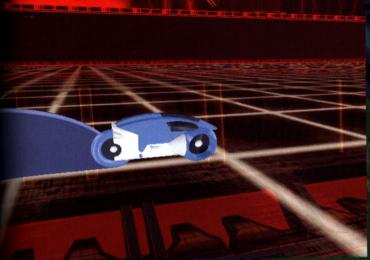
On the downside, there's not all that much in the way of innovation

on display – the ships stick to the established template, the resource management seems hardly changed and the research options offer very much the same upgrades as before. Personally, I would have liked to have seen a return of Homeworld's supply system and a multi-map system as seen in Conquest: Frontier Wars, but these are minor quibbles at best.

Ultimately, it's difficult to see many veteran Homeworld fans being upset at the state of this epic sequel. It's lavish in detail, rich in gameplay and hugely atmospheric. And the space battles are among the most magnificent we've ever seen. If, as we suspect, Relic still has a few novel surprises up its sleeve, Homeworld 2 could meet every one of our lofty expectations.







The lightcycle design has been updated by one of the film's original artists.

incrementing Jet's code from version 1.0 and up. Each full version awards attribute points to bump up health and energy capacities, as well as several other characteristics.

Subroutines, on the other hand, are the core items used for weaponry, defense and utilities. They can be upgraded from alpha to beta and gold

MONOLITH

MONOLITH **PRODUCTIONS**

Making its name with Blood in 1997, Monolith has now well and truly paid its dues. In recent years it's made some of our favourite FPSs, and now ranks among the biggest developers in the US.

- Blood, a competent FPS, marks a decent start for Monolith
- 1998 Robot fighter Shogo: Mobile Armored Division and FPS sequel Blood 2: The Chosen arrive.
- 2000 No One Lives Forever carves a little niche in FPS history with its comic '70s chic
- 2001 Aliens Vs Predator II really cements the team's reputation
- 2002 One of the finest FPSs ever, No One Lives Forever 2 wows us all
- 2003 Retro-tastic Tron 2.0 is looking good
- 2004 The Matrix Online sure to sell like mad

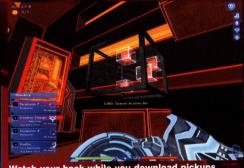
versions, though chances to do so appear to be quite rare, so quickly bumping a single attribute up to gold (the enemy profiler routine, say) is not such a great idea. Management of subroutines looks to be a core element of the game, as different missions will see Jet equipped with varying amounts of free memory for programs. The benefit of upgrading is that each piece of code gets smaller, allowing you to equip more subs at once.

The graphics core is a heavily modified version of the LithTech Jupiter engine, and despite seemingly flat textures, the trademark glow is beautifully conveyed. While there's potential for all that neon to become either monotonous or headache inducing, the levels are easy to navigate and full of scenic highlights. You can have a great time just wandering around the levels taking in the exotic cybertech designs, enjoying the fact that they aren't bloody corridors.

NO FLOPPY NECESSARY

Tron 2.0 also features a unique weapon in the shape of the ubiquitous disc. It's the linchpin of the combat system, so poor implementation could have crippled the game, but the Monolith boys seem to have nailed it. Aiming is intuitive, and if you spend enough time with the thing, careening it off a wall or two and into the back of a guard's head

TIME TO KILL



RON 2.0 MAKES YOU WORK FOR YOUR PICK-UPS.

Unlike a typical FPS, pickups must be downloaded, and that takes time and energy. You can move about just enough to cover your ass while waiting, but stray too far from the item and the connection breaks - just like that old 56.6 at home.



isn't out of the question. My only complaint is that the disc flies at such speed that while you can steer it to a certain extent in midair, doing so is difficult. That's nitpicking, of course, and while there are other weapons in the game, I found myself playing only with the disc through most levels.

What are the other weapons, then? A dongle? A bot that spams aggressors with 'Increase your penis size' emails? Sadly, no. Monolith has translated the classic array of FPS weaponry into loosely computerised analogues. A 'rod primitive' (save the giggles, lads) forms the basis for everything from a stungun

tube will be right at home. A few powerups have also been added - turbo boosts and a shield that allows you to break through walls - but the basic scheme is the same. The camera views might take a bit of getting used to, but don't appear too problematic.

"The Matrix is just Tron in a trenchcoat"

to sniper rifle (called the 'LOL'), depending on the subroutines you've got. While the disc is the star, I found the extra firepower handy at times.

ON YER BIKE!

The other draw is the stylish lightcycle, updated for the game by original designer Syd Mead. Halfway though the preview code, I was thrust into the saddle with naught but a quick tutorial to fend off an ignominious de-rezzing (that's death to you meat-based folk). Control of the grid-based bike is very simple, and anyone who's ever played Snake on a mobile while waiting for the

The demo on this month's coverdiscs also give you a sneak peek at the multiplayer disc arena (Discs of Tron, anyone?) and multiplayer lightcycle tourneys. They are probably too lightweight to take off online, but on a LAN with some mates both options could be life-draining fun. As it is, 2003 is going to be a year for very serious competition in the FPS arena. But if the finished game can follow through on the promise shown in these early levels, Tron 2.0 could offer the same refreshing change that NOLF2 was last year. Here's hoping lightning is about to strike again. IT

Colonic irritation...

Rhianna Pratchett returns to her home planet for a spot of interstellar Big Brother



You'll need to balance your colonists' needs with fulfilling your contracts.



Characters include a whacked-out hippy and two female Japanese teen-punks.

WHEN IT COMES to realtime strategy, you're usually dealing with tiny, anonymous people that you'll happily sacrifice or leave to starve for the good of

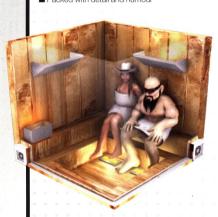
the whole. Space Colony, the new management strategy title from Stronghold developer FireFly Studios, hopes to avoid this cold Vulcan logic with a caring, sharing approach that would

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER FireFly Studios **PUBLISHER** Gathering WEBSITE www.gathering.com ETA Autumn 2003

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Inventive new RTS/God game from the makers of Stronghold
- Look after up to 20 colonists, all with their own unique personalities
- Pushes the way forward for personality-driven strategy games
- Packed with detail and humour



other and which don't." **COLONIAL QUIBBLES**

You'll need to keep each and every one of your colonists happy in order for them to actually get up the motivation to work for you. Of course, there's no single way to please everyone, and each character has their own desires and drives. Take Stig for example, a Norwegian biker. He'll need constant entertainment, with things like a Zero-G machine to relax him and a disco so he can get down to some serious moshing at the end of a hard day's graft. But build stuff for Stig, and you might end up alienating Tammy, a 40-something Southern barfly who gets queasy in a Zero-G machine and would rather drink until she's rat-arsed than slam-dive.

make Bones proud. Putting you in charge

of a small group of space colonists, it's all about managing the varying needs and

whims of a group of lonely frontiersmen.

FireFly's Director Simon Bradbury.

"We see the human side of gaming being a big growth area," explains

"You might be used to having a hundred

workers in a castle to deal with, but in Space Colony a stiff challenge might be 10 people. You're going to have

to get to know those 10 people well,

small space. It's not just about feeding

their needs for hygiene, their needs for

social interaction and relaxation, plus which characters get on with each

them, it's about maintaining their needs -

because they're all cooped up in a

Once you get your lazy, bickering bunch of colonists to work, there are local



With influences from Aliens, Red Dwarf and a lot of old Star Trek episodes, Space Colony looks set to offer good measures of humour and frivolity, as well as all the atmosphere and detail shown in FireFly's excellent Stronghold. The 2D isometric viewpoint means that the game positively teems with life and is great to just sit back and watch. We'll be revisiting this promising little game in the near future,

case of the floating brain alien, actually change the personality of your colonists.

so watch this, erm, space.





If you're out of sick days, call in Undead...





Out Now



You can choose to target a specific body location, though your chances of hitting it will be significantly reduced.

Whisper: "Donner und Blitzen", it's...



THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Nival Interactive **PUBLISHER** Bigben Interactive WEBSITE www.nival.com/eng/s2_info **ETA** September 2003

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Intricate turn-based tactics in WWII
- The great-looking 3D environment gets the hell blown out of it
- About a million weapons to loose off
- RPG-style character progressions



FOR A MOMENT back

there, it looked like the battle between real-time and turn-based strategy games had been conclusively won by the genre that knows no pause. Turn-based games retreated to the safety of the hardcore wargaming community while their real-time counterparts occupied the chart-topping high ground.

But some genres refuse to lie down and die, and Silent Storm is the latest title with the balls to opt for more contemplative 'your go, my go' gameplay. And once you see it in action for yourself, you'll thank the stars it does.

AXIS OF EVIL

Here's the deal. You are the commander of a team of WWII Special Forces troopers on either the Axis or Allied side. Your

squad of up to six hardnuts gets called into action across Europe, assigned missions ranging from completing enemy generals to capturing secret enemy weapons from research facilities.

Whatever the task, your lightning reactions are no good to you on this battlefield. It's only the sharpness of your tactical mind that separates you from meeting your god here. Picture the wartorn scene: you're in a rubble-strewn urban maze. You need to clear a house full of hun. Your snipers are taking pot shots at the windows from the cover of

the bushes, while your two grenadiers with submachine guns are standing either side of the front door ready to pile in. One kicks the door down and the other charges in gun at the ready, only to be welcomed with a face full of 9mm. Wrong! Why didn't you shoot out the windows to the room next door and clamber through? Or chuck in some pineapples before making your move? Having the time to ponder your moves before you make them might be unusual in today's world of high-octane, fast-action gaming, but it sure makes for an engrossing experience.

"Your troops vault walls, crawl under obstacles, holster and reload weapons, and gush blood when hit"



renades can waste whole squads of enemies in one fell swoop.



You can blast through walls with high-explosive grenades.

NUTS AND BOLTS

The game is based around an action point system in the same way as such genre classics as X-Com, Jagged Alliance and Laser Squad. Every member of your squad gets to spend his allotment on whatever actions he likes before the turn passes to your opponent.

What really makes Silent Storm stick out from the crowd though, is the

CV



NIVAL INTERACTIVE

Tell you what, these princes of Muscovy are shaping up to be major players in PC games development. Let's raise the iron curtain on some of their previous triumphs.

1999 Nival bursts on to the international scene with Rage Of Mages II, an RTS/RPG hybrid.

2000 Also an RPG, *Evil Islands* doesn't win Nival many new friends. Because it was poor.

2001 Etherlords wows PC ZONE with its unusual and addictive turn-based gameplay.

2003 It may have been a little derivative, but *Blitzkrieg* is arguably the best WWII RTS to date. contribution the game's engine makes to proceedings. Not only does it look fantastic, with brilliant animations and scenery that gets the hell blown out of it during the firefights, but the fact that holes can be blown through walls and floors means your tactical options are expanded astronomically.

The game camera is fixed at an isometric viewpoint, but you have plenty of freedom to zoom, rotate and tilt the view until the terrain has given up its every secret. While it won't end up in the Louvre, the devil is in the detail in this engine, and what a well animated demon it is. Your troops vault walls, crawl under obstacles, holster and reload weapons, and gush blood when hit – all with total fluency.

ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE

But what most catches your eye is the way the environment interacts with the blood and thunder combat, providing an incredible amount of visceral excitement for a turn-based game. Bullets shatter glass, wreck plasterwork, and even blow sizeable holes through more flimsy walls. Lights get blown out, furniture shattered and vehicles wrecked. Grenade blasts rip holes in wooden floors and shatter windows in their vicinity. Fragments of shells ricochet round corners causing minor wounds, and after a protracted

ARMS AND THE MAN

LUCKY IT'S TURN-BASED, AS YOU'LL NEED PLENTY OF TIME JUST TO DECIDE WHAT WEAPON TO USE

If you've dabbled in *Medal Of Honor* and *Battlefield 1942*, you may think of yourself as a bit of an authority in WWII weapons. But, frankly, until you can identify the 12 or so hand grenades available in *Silent Storm*, let alone the frightening array of submachine guns, pistols, rifles and other shooting irons, you know nothing.

And as well as every form of portable firepower known to 1943 man, there are also fixed heavy weapon emplacements dotted around that you can get behind and turn against the enemy. And, much like in the aforementioned FPSs, the game has a habit of sending a well-timed squad of counter-attacking enemy troops charging right towards you once you do get your thumbs on the trigger of that emplaced heavy machinegun. Let them come!





indoor firefight, buildings can end up looking like they've just been carpet bombed by a squadron of B-52s.

Between the bloodletting you'll find yourself ligging at HQ. Here you get to recruit squad members, check up on the latest intelligence, and then raid the armoury before heading out on your next job. Each squad member has a character class and the usual bunch of stats to distinguish them, whether they be medics, engineers or snipers. Kills accrue experience for your boys,

eventually leading to levelling up and the acquisition of special abilities.

While it's faithful in the weapons, settings and equipment, Silent Storm is at heart a far-fetched swashbuckling adventure, with missions finding you and your die-hard posse surrounded behind enemy lines, or thwarting the bad guy just as he's about to make his getaway in his fiendish secret flying machine. Which, in other words, means it's fun.

As you can tell, we've got high hopes for this one, especially if the campaign structure can offer as much depth as the tactical firefights. The turn-based counterattack has commenced.



Part Three of our grand tour of British games developers takes our intrepid explorers to South London. Once again, Martin Korda and Rhianna Pratchett set off in separate directions to talk to the cream of games development in...



FIVE THINGS YOU NEVER KNEW ABOUT... SOUTH LONDON

- South London is a prime target for an imminent chemical attack. At least, that's what one gullible member of Computer Artworks was led to believe by his colleagues. He then fled to Bath to escape, only to return two days later to find it was all a hoax Tragically, this is actually a true story.
- It appears some French people think The Lord of the Rings was set in South London. Catching a tube at Oxford Circus to Morden, a group of the garlic-munchers were overheard jabbering about their excitement at seeing Mordor first hand.
- In some parts of South London, cannabis can be smoked freely, apart from when the police catch you doing it and give you a good kicking, of course
- Anthony Holden, Dave Woods, Will Porter and the shoe bomber Richard Reid have all called Brixton home. And they wonder why the crime rate is so high.
- During their occupation of England, the Romans encouraged mercenaries to settle in South London. That'll explain Brixton then.

THE DEVELOPERS

Black Cactus

Currently Working On - Several PC products - watch this space

Computer Artworks

Currently Working On - Several as yet unannounced PC and console projects

FireFly Studios

Currently Working On - Space Colony

"GORRA LIE? Eger, mayt, gorra lie?" Slowly, I turned my head, eyelids hammering open and shut like a paparazzo's camera lens against the glare radiating off the pink and blue shell suit that had sidled up next to me. "Eeeeeeer, gorra lie?" I looked up, the request had come from a monumentally tall, dentally challenged youth, looming over me with a sinister grin. Just then, the door in front of me buzzed. I pushed it open, stumbling through, hot-tailed by the toothless shell-suited simpleton. From the corner of my eye I saw his arm reach up. Spinning round like a startled fawn I staggered backwards, reeling in

terror as my assailant brought the small rigid object down towards my face. I froze. "A lie mayt, you def or sumfink?" A Marlborough Light hovered in front of my face. Who says smoking kills?

BLACK CACTUS

Having waved Rhianna off on her journey to see FireFly Studios in Battersea (see page 57), I'd arrived bang on time (miracle number two of the day) at Mordenbased Black Cactus - a four-yearold development company responsible for RTS gems such as Warrior Kings and its follow up, WK:Battles - based, as I'd just found out, above a youth offenders correction centre. After miracle number three - the most rickety lift on the planet making it to the third floor - I was met by David Bailey, one of Black Cactus's hugely affable and eloquent directors, who beckoned me to a meeting room while

simultaneously thrusting a cup of coffee into my hand. He meant business. So I began, as I've come to do with these Best of British interviews, by asking a bit about the history of the company.

"We decided that we wanted to make strategy and role-playing games based on a reusable architecture. Our founding design principles were to deliver new highs of strategy, gameplay and realism,

as well as creating a reusable toolset. We've succeeded so far, but it's been much, much harder than we ever imagined." Indeed, in these turbulent times for game developers, Black Cactus has had it even harder than most, with publisher problems almost leading to financial ruin. It's testament indeed to the talent of

the team and financial nous of its directors that they're still alive and kicking. Black Cactus is clearly among the new breed of game developers, a company



David Bailey



Warrior Kings: Battles, the skirmish-based follow-up to Warrior Kings, cemented Black Cactus's reputation for quality.

superstar trying to upstage their colleagues. Instead, the team exuded a unity, a desire to work towards a common goal of producing quality titles, which push out the boundaries of originality ever further. Sadly, not everyone seems to share this vision, as I found out when I later chased publisher Wanadoo for information about Black Cactus's highly promising 3D RTS Crusaders: Battle for Outremer. Having seemingly refused to answer my questions about the state of the game, I was finally informed that it had

been canned. Why? "We have decided to stop the development of Crusaders. Indeed, Crusaders doesn't match anymore with our publishing strategy which focus on online games for console and PC," came the abrupt reply from Tiphaine Locqueneux, communications manager at Wanadoo. It seems a ludicrous action, given that Crusaders was clearly their best game. Let's just hope that isn't the last we hear of it.

The 22-strong Black Cactus team.

WKB: still a Zone favourite.

After a few hours of annoying inquiries about people's roles at the company, past

that is fully aware of the pitfalls of the business and just as prepared and capable to deal with them, a fact reflected in their unique approach to game development. Add to this a small but proven team of 22 talented individuals and a revolutionary game-design toolset called the Cactus SPINE, and you have recipe for success.

BACKBONE

decided this was a good time to quiz David further about the SPINE toolset, subject clearly dear to his heart. It enables our designers to deliver a full game with practically zero programmer input on the critical path. If a designer needs missile troops that skirmish forward, laying down covering fire and then leapfrogging forward, he or she can deliver that in the game engine in a few hours." David was visibly beaming. Little wonder. With tasks like these often taking other developers days if not weeks to achieve, David certainly has every reason to feel proud. "They can then test, refine, and perfect that system. The toolset is self-documenting and has a heap of diagnostic and analytical tools built in to make the whole design process run as smoothly as possible.'

Sitting back triumphantly. he paused dramatically as if to give me a few moments to marvel at these facts. And

"We set out to deliver new highs of strategy and realism"

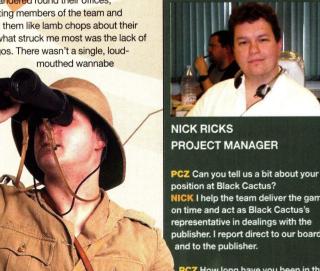
DAVID BAILEY DIRECTOR, BLACK CACTUS

marvel Ldid. Thanks to the Cactus SPINE the company has become one of the most sought after developers in the UK, with countless PC and console development offers coming their way in the past twelve months. With costs and time-frames reduced thanks to the SPINE, and with two quality games under their belts, it's hardly any wonder. David had certainly convinced me that something special was going on at this still relatively small development company. Watch this space. OK, I didn't mean literally, you can move on to the next paragraph now...

With a quick handshake, David bade me a warm farewell and unleashed me on the unsuspecting members of his team as he shot off to a meeting.

WORD OF WARNING

As I wandered round their offices, accosting members of the team and grilling them like lamb chops about their jobs, what struck me most was the lack of any egos. There wasn't a single, loud-



RISING STAR OF THE INDUSTRY

HERE, WE INTRODUCE YOU TO SOME OF THE INDUSTRY'S MOST TALENTED INDIVIDUALS, THOSE WE FEEL CONFIDENT YOU'LL BE HEARING A LOT MORE ABOUT IN THE FUTURE



NICK I help the team deliver the game publisher. I report direct to our board,

CZ How long have you been in the profession, and what jobs have you had in the industry? NICK Five years ago I was a level

designer at Bullfrog, and then a

games designer. A few years ago I moved to Black Cactus, and after a nine-month stint as a lead designer I started my current role.

PCZ Can you give us a quick rundown of your role?

CK A lot of my job is administration, amending the schedule or identifying key risks in the development plan. I'm the focal point for meetings with external companies. Essentially, I have to make sure all the strands are woven together and that the game is done well and delivered on time.

PCZ What advice can you give to those wanting to follow in your footsteps? NICK Doing a game-specific academic course helps. Also, proven project management skills gained on real projects backed up by strong academic understanding help too. Alternatively, approach a developer with examples of your own levels and mods, and display a serious desire to learn about the business side of development.

experience and the contents of their packed lunches, my repertoire of questions ran as dry as a freshly milked cow and I bade my farewells. As I left, one of the designers (and former Bullfrog employee) Andy Trowers stopped me, a grim look on his face. "Look out for the guys from the youth offenders correction centre downstairs." "Cheers," I replied, a wry smile cracking across my lips, "I'll be sure to look out for them." With that, I legged it for my life...

COMPUTER **ARTWORKS**

What a difference. After the squalid surrounds of Morden, where every passer-by looks like they'd happily mug you for the gum in your mouth (or even the gums in your mouth), it was time for me to jet off, or rather, catch the tube, to the regal surroundings of Victoria, the home of organic art lovers Computer Artworks. After being given directions from a deranged market stall vendor who spat at me while screaming instructions two millimetres from my face, I found my way to the base of the team behind last year's hit title, The Thing, who are currently working on several new, as yet



Alan Bunker

unannounced, titles. Alan Bunker and Nick Rooke (both senior producers) were the unlucky individuals who'd pulled the short straws and had to spend half an hour being subjected to my incessant questioning.

THINGAMAJIG

*Computer Artworks was founded in 1993, by Mark Atkinson and William Latham, and between them they were responsible for creating the Organic Arts series." Let me stop you there for a second, Nick, while I quickly explain what that is. The Organic Arts series is a collection of software packages that meld cutting-edge computer technology with organic artforms, allowing for an array of weird and wonderful mutations to be rendered and





The Thing: nice flamethrowers.



The men of Computer Artworks.

www.artworks.co.uk/organic.htm for more on this). It was Virgin who first saw the potential of Organic Arts, and signed Computer Artworks to develop Evolva, a solid action/adventure where genetically mutating creatures beat seven shades of shit out of each other.

Universal Studios were so impressed by Evolva that they signed the team to make the classy multi-format hit, The Thing. "The story



Computer Artworks' 2000 all-action effort Evolva had some nice ideas.

goes that one day the guys at Universal were standing round a water cooler and one of the producers said, 'I've just seen this game called Evolva, and the imagery in it is really organic, with tentacles all over the place. That would be a great engine to use on The Thing licence.' So at the end of 2001, we started work on it," explains Nick proudly.

QUALITY TIME

The Thing proved to be one of the handful of quality film-licensed PC games in recent memory. Was this because there was no pressure on the team to coincide their product's release date with the film's? "It was a huge benefit not having a set date," explained Nick. It also helped that the film already had a cult following,

THE STATE OF PLAY

I ACCOSTED ALAN BUNKER, A SENIOR PRODUCER AT COMPUTER ARTWORKS, AND ASKED HIM ABOUT HIS VIEWS ON ORIGINALITY IN THE GAMES INDUSTRY. HERE'S WHAT WAS SAID ...

PCZ What do you think about the current state of games originality? LAN What's

having a great

gameplay experience. Take Medal of Honor. The D-Day level was scripted, but was still amazing. A platform game today is probably not that much different in design to a platform game from 20 years ago, apart from the fact it's in 3D. But so long as the experience is fun and it's well produced then I'm happy.

PCZ But if things remain the same, don't they become stale? ALAN I think if games were really that stale, people simply wouldn't be buying them. Personally, I'm still out there buying platform and racing games, and I'm quite happy to be doing that.

PCZ Do you think the scope for originality depends on the format? ALAN The PC has a mouse and a keyboard, and that gives it a massive advantage over a console. It's also constantly evolving. So it's much easier to be original on the PC, due to these two reasons.



FireFly's new game Space Colony is a departure from their historical roots.

and that John Carpenter was involved, giving us feedback and coming to E3 to help promote the game. The average length of time to make a film is six months. But for a game it's closer to two years. So there's a conflict at the moment, between game and film times." Which probably explains why so many filmbased games end up looking so poor and rushed.

"That's why developers need to pitch for film-licensed games **Nick Rooke** that they can use their existing technology to create. There's no point taking on a genre you've never done before that needs a whole new engine. There's no time. What you have to do is to marry your existing technology with the design experience that you already have," added Alan. Good advice indeed, and something any over-ambitious developer would do well to heed. As Computer Artworks has shown, making a quality film-based title is possible, so long as you have the right tools, publisher support and know-how. It's time both the film and games industry took note.

RHIANNA GOES TO FIREFLY

I've been reliably informed by cab drivers that the roads in South London are different, Unfortunately, we're not talking yellow bricks and singing dwarves, more miles and miles of nameless, identical high-streets. So it's a wonder, really, that Ican find FireFly Studios at all (hopefully Martin's had an easier time finding Black Cactus and Computer Artworks). But eventually I do - in a shared office building in Battersea, tucked above a Foxtons, with a lobby boasting so many cushions and cobra lights that it looks like



FireFly: representing South London.

the entrance to a rather affluent Turkish massage parlour.

Instead, it's the base of operations for FireFly Studios, the developer behind the castle building sims Stronghold and

> Stronghold: Crusader. Director Simon Bradbury told me a bit more about the studio, which was formed in 1999 by several members of the UK wing of Impressions, the makers of the Caesar games. "We'd worked on so many games like Lords of the Realm and the Caesar series that

we knew exactly the game we wanted to do, which was a castle sim that was essentially a city builder, crossed with an RTS," explains Simon about the drive to start up FireFly.

FLY FOOD

Their gaming pedigree stood FireFly in good stead, as there's nothing publishers like more than a team who have a proven track record of delivering the goods to a tight deadline. Nevertheless, the studio started in much the same way as every developing house. in a tiny office, eating the same pizza for three months. But they managed to

GREAT BRITAIN

FIREFLY'S DIRECTOR, SIMON BRADBURY, TALKS ABOUT HIS VIEWS ON THE STATE OF THE UK GAMES INDUSTRY

PCZ How do you think the UK games industry is faring? ON From a developer point of view it seems to be quite healthy. Even

though a few development houses have closed, others have opened up, so it's fairly balanced.

PCZ In what way do you think Brit games differ from US ones? ON I think games from the US tend to be bigger budget and drier, but I generally prefer the quirkiness of UK games. There's an element in the British psyche that's always going to produce more interesting games.

PCZ What annoys you about the games industry? MON I'd say it is when I play a game that's nothing more than an old game in a new wrapper. That's the last thing I want to experience as a player.

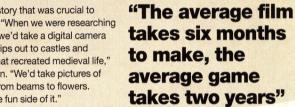
PCZ How do you think gaming needs to change in this country? ON It would be nice to get some kind of government recognition (not necessarily financial) that gaming is a serious industry. I think there's still a view that it's all toys and a bit childish.

medieval history that was crucial to Stronghold. "When we were researching Stronghold we'd take a digital camera with us on trips out to castles and museums that recreated medieval life," recalls Simon. "We'd take pictures of everything from beams to flowers. That was the fun side of it."

Stronghold led onto Stronghold: Crusader, which was essentially Stronghold part two, and now Firefly's latest project is Space Colony (previewed on page 52). This is also a building sim, but this time it revolves around juggling the needs of a group of space colonists, while trying to keep the alien locals from biting your legs off or borrowing the Jacuzzi. "I think players really liked the visual aspect

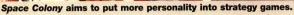
of Stronghold, and we wanted to reflect that in Space Colony," explains Simon. "But this game is based around a smaller group of people than Stronghold was, and this idea of focusing on the people aspect of RTS games is Simon Bradbury something we're trying to push." And if their last two

> projects were anything to go by, FireFly could well be sitting on yet



NICK ROOKE COMPUTER ARTWORKS

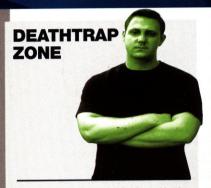






REVIEWS

THE DEFINITIVE LOWDOWN ON ALL THE LATEST PC GAMES



■ SENIOR REVIEWS ED Martin Korda

I can't quite believe it, but it's true. Counter-Strike: Condition Zero is finally here, a mere 16 issues after we were first promised it. Either that's one shit postal system we have or the game's been majorly revamped since then. Wanna know which? Well, turn to page 62.

What's more, Tomb Raider: The Angel Of Darkness review code also slapped onto my desk this month with a satisfying plop, to round off a great month reviewwise. Sadly, the month hasn't been quite as good for others.

Now, I've heard some crackers in my time when it comes to excuses for not doing a review, but never have I seen a chain of events like the one which stopped new boy Will getting his Aquanox 2 copy written. Or maybe he was just so desperate for an extension he went to extreme lengths.

With the review due Monday, he proceeded to pour boiling water all over his hand while taking part in some routine tea making duties, and spent the rest of the day having anti-burn cream administered by a buxom nurse. On Tuesday, while going for a check up, some thieving twat kicked in the door to his house and stole his GameCube, along with all the save games he's been stockpilling over the past six months [that'll teach him to play consoles – Edl.

Meanwhile, back at the office, in what was clearly a blatant attempt to buy himself a little more time by brutally maiming me as well, I was severely electrocuted by a suspiciously faulty water cooler. With Porter safely at home and proud owner of a cast-iron alibi, it would have been the perfect murder. Oh, and in case you're still wondering, he did eventually write the review, I'm only nominally brain damaged and Will no longer has a damn GameCube to waste his time on. Oh happy days.



Can the single-player version of the world's favourite online shooter outflank the opposition? All is revealed on page 62.

THE ZONE SCORING SYSTEM

Some people (mainly game publishers) say that our scoring system is harsh. It's not. It's honest and built around the seemingly outdated idea that 50 per cent is an average score. Likewise, 70 per cent is a good score, anything above 80 per cent is excellent, and 90 per cent and above is a Classic. Talking of Classic awards, don't expect to see one every issue as we don't chuck them around like confetti.

OUR REVIEWERS

We think our reviewers are the best in the business. Each one is a specialist in numerous genres and will have played every major release so no game is judged in isolation. We also make sure the right game gets



Only games that score 90 per cent or more receive the coveted Classic award. The best of the best.



The second tier award for games scoring between 80 and 89 per cent. Essential purchases. reviewed by the right person, which means you won't see Steve Hill reviewing an RPG and we won't let Rhianna loose on *FIFA 2003*. You can have your say on the games and our reviews as well. If you have a comment to make then please email your views to letters@pczone.co.uk and entitle your email 'Feedback'.

ONLINE REVIEWS AND REVIEW UPDATES

We review a lot of games before they go on sale, and if there are no public servers running before we go to print we won't second guess how the game's going to play online. Instead you'll find dedicated online reviews of all the major releases in our regular Update section. This is also the place where we take a fresh look at games we think have changed significantly as is the case with persistent online games or through major patch releases.

OUR PCS

We test games on a variety of systems so we can report how they perform in the real world. All our reviewed games are played on the manufacturer's minimum specification, as well as our top-end rig, the Area-51 from Alienware.



MEET THE TEAM

What are you currently playing?

Other than *Counter-Strike* what else in life is better in single-player?



DAVE WOODS

Enemy Territory and Counter-Strike: Condition Zero

Stalking



JAMIE SEFTON

Enemy Territory and Pure Pinball (mit 100,00 pollygonnen)

Chess, because I'm the only person who can match my superior intellect.



CS: CONDITION ZERO It's finally here!



RE-RELEASES
Older games at new prices



FEEDBACKWhere you air your opinions



REALITY CHECK
Real racing vs PC racing

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STEVE HILL COMPARES NASCAR AND INDYCAR RACING TO THEIR PC EQUIVALENTS









MARTIN KORDA

Championship Manager 4 and Enemy Territory

Eating a whole cow.



ANTHONY HOLDEN

Enemy Territory and Soldier Of Fortune II

Competing for oxygen in a foundering submarine.



PAUL PRESLEY

Republic: The Revolution and Enemy Territory

Nothing. Turn to page 100 to find out why (BLATANT PLUG ALERT).



WILL PORTER

Soldier Of Fortune II and Aquanox 2

Waiting for three and a half hours in casualty, with a scalded hand stuck in a binbag.



STEVE HILL

IndyCar Series

Watching TV. Other people ruin it. [You miserable bastard – Ed.]

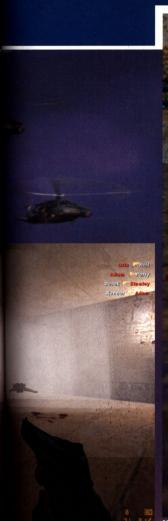


MARK HILL

Space Quest 0: Replicated (a free fan-made prequel)

Reading, writing and shitting. Everything else benefits from a co-op mode.







Never, ever tell a kebab shop owner his doner meat is made from dead Alsatians.

COUNTER-STRIKE: CONDITION ZERO

£29.99 | Pub: VU Games | Dev: Ritual Entertainment/Valve | ETA: August 12 | www.cs-conditionzero.com

REQUIRES PIII 500, 96MB RAM and a 16MB 3D card DESIRES PIII 800, 128MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card

The single-player version of the world's favourite online shooter is finally here.

Martin Korda goes, goes, goes into the fray to find a game of two halves



INPERSPECTIVE

BATTLEFIELD 1942

Reviewed Issue 121, Score 78% This WWII FPS is almost as bad in single-player as Condition Zero's single-player campaign, thanks to some atrocious Bots. However, it's one of the best, and fastest-growing online team-based shooters around. With a huge selection of vehicles to pilot, it's a must have for anyone who loves to shoot online.

RAINBOW SIX 3: RAVEN SHIELD

Reviewed Issue 126. Score 84%

The latest and best of the Rainbow Six special-ops series. Slow-paced, fiendishly hard and hugely tactical. This is the ideal alternative if you prefer to think before you shoot.

"HI HONEY, I'M HOME."

"Hello dear, how was your day?"

"Oh... you know... pretty average really. Got to work, had a cup of coffee, a muffin, a banana. Checked my emails... mum says hi. Hold on there was something else... damn it... wait, I've got it. At about 15:00 hours we received a Code Red from Tac-Ops, who relayed the position of a terror cell to us. Major draaaag. So after afternoon tea and a nap, we pootled off in a stealth chopper to have a look, infiltrated their base and you'll never guess who we found."

"Auntie Maureen?"

"Close. Osama Bin Laden. Heh, who would have thought it? In Somerset of all places."

"That's nice dear."

"And Billy got his balls shot off by a terrorist."

"Yes dear, stew for supper?"

Such is the life of a counter-terrorist operative. One minute you're sitting around sharpening a knife on your stubble, the next your



intestines are being used as a skipping rope by some terrorist's niece. It's a job where you never know what dangers you'll be facing tomorrow, whether you'll live to see another day, and whether you'll make it home in time for Neighbours.

MAKE IT REAL

Danger, intrigue, brutal firefights, a battle of wits against the most uncompromising and brutal men on the planet. It's a scenario which many an online shooter, in particular Counter-Strike, has tried to replicate... and failed. Why? Simple. Because it's nigh-on impossible to submerge yourself in a terrorist/counter-terrorist bloodbath when you've just had your eyeballs shot out by some bespectacled snot-nosed aim-bot-abusing brat from Philadelphia called Chad - AKA FuKW1t - who mocks you constantly through your headphones for being crap in an undropped-balls-pitched squeal. The impudent little twat gets to you so much that all you end up thinking about is how much you'd like to grab the little prick by the neck, slap off his glasses, and hang him out of a window by his ankles while beating him round the back of

the legs with a sawn-off oar. And I don't think I'm alone in thinking that... anyone? What's more, how the hell are you supposed to improve when you die within seconds of each round?

How? Counter-Strike: Condition Zero, that's how. At least, that's what we've been led to believe until now. Due 16 months ago (when it was still being developed by Gearbox), Condition Zero claims to be the single-player version of Counter-Strike, the world's favourite online shooter. Which (obviously) means, you don't need to go online to play it.

INFORMATION **BLACKOUT**

Now, from what we could gather from the information trickling out of Ritual (who appear to have totally changed the game since the Gearbox days), this meant an 18 mission, worldwide campaign against terror, where you and a collection of intelligent bots fight as a team to thwart terrorist cells, in all-new missions not too dissimilar to the ones you currently play online. We were wrong.

Split into two parts, Condition Zero's first half (we'll come to the other, far superior half later) offers an 18



Your team-mates in the single-player missions are next to useless.

mission, worldwide campaign against terror, where you singlehandedly fight to thwart terrorist cells, while a handful of brain-dead AI team-mates stand around looking at flowers urging you on to do everything for them, in missions not too dissimilar to the kind of basic, bedroom-coded rubbish you'd expect from a ten-year-old making their first foray into level designing. And you can't play them online. Or with other people.

Before you wade into the action, you're offered a training course, which is basic at best, and inadequate at worst. After this, it's on to the campaign. Each of the 18 missions begins with a token cinematic sequence, outlining the mission goals (defuse bomb, rescue hostages, kill VIP etc) before you set off on your lonely trek. In fact, while we're here, why don't we get a feel for a typical mission?

BLOODY TYPICAL

The first level picks you up and plops you down, deep underground. The Japanese underground to be precise, where you find yourself on a tube, keeping one eye out for terrorists and one on the white panties peeking out cheekily from beneath the skirts of the Japanese schoolgirls sitting opposite you (hey, they said they were 16 OK?). The next thing you know, you're getting beaten round the head by a man who looks like a South American paedophile, while his mate wires up a bomb and randomly shoots passengers.

Mustering all your years of training, you pass out, waking just in time to see the bomb go off. Now you're pissed especially as those schoolgirls have gone. Kidnapped apparently. With the place swarming with counter-



Defenestration can be a wonderful thing.

terrorists (CTs), you're ready to join with your compadres and pump your assailants up to the fillings with lead. Sadly, only one other CT, Gerald the model-train enthusiast, will come with you. He opens a door. You walk through. He closes the door behind you and wishes you luck. The bastard! Seconds later, you're cowering behind your riot shield (one of the game's new weapons), futilely popping away at a dozen or so terrorists with a cap gun.

Barely alive, you stumble past the corpses, blood smattered all around the white walls like vulgar graffiti, diving on to a

Where's the back up? There is none. Where's the teamwork? What team? Even after just this first mission, you're left in no doubt about two things. a) Those girls definitely weren't 16. b) This isn't Counter-Strike, it's a straightforward, arcadey, open door, shoot enemy, walk down corridor, jump on box, shoot barrel, scripted FPS. And not a very good one at that, either. Throughout the next few missions this suspicion intensifies as you're persistently sent off on your own to accomplish goals your team should be helping you with. And on the rare occasions when they bother engaging the enemy, their bullets prove

"Before you wade into the action, you're offered a training course"

bomb in order to defuse it, only to die immediately as two terrorists appear from nowhere and shoot you. Reload. You dive on to the bomb to defuse it, then die as two terrorists appear from nowhere and shoot you. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat. Rip off earphones, throw them at monitor. Reload. Die. Throw monitor out of window.

about as effective as sponge plugs, with 30 of their bullets accomplishing what yours can achieve in two or three.

SPANNER IN THE WORKS

And what of the new tools we've heard so much about? The radio, the blowtorch, the fibre optics? One word. Pointless. All of the new tools can only be used in designated

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

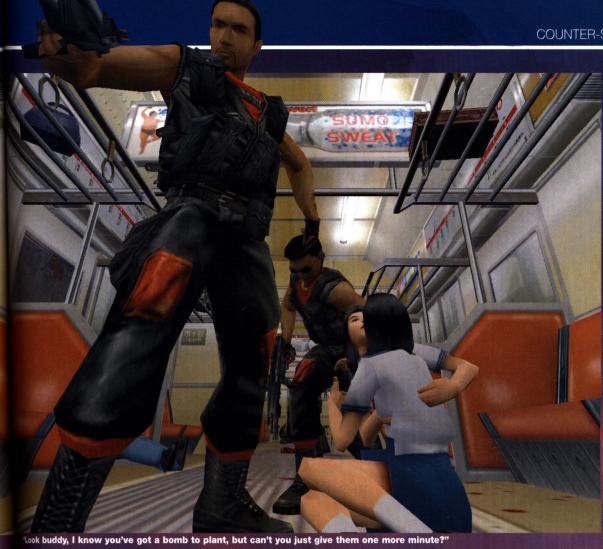




More blowtorch action is definitely needed.

POINT BLANK MISSES

So many opportunities missed and so little space to write them in. Let's start with the campaign game. Scripting has its place in any FPS, but the beauty of CS is its unpredictability, with no two games ever being the same. Why didn't Ritual let us use the tools in a freeform way? So we could use fibre-optics to look through any door in the game, rather than just the odd one here and there? The same with the blowtorch. There could have been secret passages to discover and open, allowing alternative access and escape routes from terrorist strongholds. Oh, and then there's the small detail of teamwork. Yeah, some of that would have been nice. When Gearbox brought in the game to the ZONE offices a little over a year ago, there were groups of CTs and terrorists shooting the shit out of each other. Now it's just you against the world. Finally, some new CS levels to play against the Bots and online would have been a nice touch as well.



areas, which may as well come replete with flashing signs saying 'Use Blowtorch Here To Progress'. The missions are more scripted than the WKE, and within hours the whole affair becomes monumentally tedious, with an avalanche of glitches and shortcomings jumping aut at you like a swarm divirtual fleas.

out at you like a swarm
of virtual fleas.
Levels regularly
degenerate into laborious
earches for where to go next,
often forcing you to find
an obscure box

jump on to

ain access

to an equally obscure ledge, while enemies materialise in front of you out of thin air, obviously transported into the game from some terrorist dimension unbeknown to us.

Add to this an abundance of barrels filled with high explosives which are always conveniently positioned right next to large groups of terrorists, the inability to pick up enemy weapons, not being able to shoot enemies while they're in the middle of a scripted animation and stealth sections which are lamer than a two legged horse, and it's hard not to feel you're trapped in Clichesville (twinned with Crapsville) - a town where there's nothing new and little to get excited about.

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

But even a little is better than nothing, and while the campaign as a whole will invite little more than derision from CS veterans, there are some merits to this section of CZ. While enemies' often flamboyant entrances (rolling from behind a wall, throwing over a table and taking cover) are all scripted, the level of intelligence they show during a firefight is sporadically impressive. When in groups

they fan out and take cover, when in a position of superiority they close you down, caging you in to prevent you from escaping. Throw a grenade at them and they'll run and cower, aim at their heads and they'll try to duck down. Then there are some of the more entertaining scripted sequences, like shooting down a Harrier Jump Jet as it strafes you from above, or reliving the final chase scene from *Terminator 2* as you try to shoot down a pursuing helicopter. And the dated *Half-Life* engine has received a thorough makeover, updated to just about passable modernday standards.

The weapons from Counter-Strike are all present and correct, as well as some new ones too, meaning variety isn't a problem, but sadly the buggy-like radio controlled bomb that we were promised, which can be driven into enemy encampments, is MIA.

THE REAL DEAL

"So, the 18-mission campaign's a real let-down, eh? So why the relatively high score Korda? Hmmm? You been taking bribes? You getting' a cut of the profits? Well?"

Bloody hell, my schizophrenia-induced alter ego (Sharon) is getting impatient these days, isn't she? OK, let me explain. Remember, I said there were two parts to this game, and it's part two that lifts the score immensely. Even though all the features you're about to read about will be available as a free V1.6

COUNTER-STRIKE V1.6



A novel way to clear the snow from your porch. Simply blow the whole thing up.

STILL FREE FOR MASSES

If you already own a copy of Half-Life and a 56K modem or above and want all of the new Counter-Strike features for free, then you'll be able to download Counter-Strike V1.6 (which we've been informed by Valve will already be available for download when you read this) and enjoy all of the new weapons from CZ, as well as providing you with all the Bot features of the retail release. Which means millions of fans worldwide will be able to enjoy the evolution of Counter-Strike. Basically what we're saying is, if you're an existing Counter-Strike player, there's little need to buy Condition Zero, unless you want to play through a disappointing and hugely flawed single-player FPS.

download (see panel), the inclusion here and the fact you don't need Half-Life to run the game (as you do with the V1.6 CS download) makes it an ideal purchase for Half-Lifeless Counter-Strike newbies and those new to PC gaming.

Here's the deal. Imagine playing all the existing official Counter-Strike levels with bots. Intelligent bots. Who work together to win a level. Who cover each other, protect bombsites and use stealth when navigating corners. Bots who are fallible, but also learn from mistakes when certain tactics simply aren't producing the goods.

BOT BRILLIANCE

Imagine playing without the need to go online, without the humiliation of getting no kills. Playing at a standard that'll help you improve your game, have fun and not have to listen to the arrogant ramblings of loners who've quit their jobs, abandoned their families and who piss in a cup so as to spend the maximum amount of time playing CS online.

Imagine playing with a couple of mates online or over a LAN, but still having a full server for a fulfilling and challenging game. Having bots that, just like humans, each have their own playing styles, be they campers,



Bots display superb intelligence and teamwork in the Counter-Strike maps.

rushers, flushers or pistoleers. Games that can range from a 30-second massacre to a five-minute game of cat and mouse as you and the last bot hunt each other down. Counter-Strike: Condition Zero (and CS V1.6) makes all of the above possible.

Every game feels realistic, and the four difficulty settings mean you never feel overawed. Put simply, it's the most entertaining, fulfilling and timesapping team-based singleplayer shooter I've ever played, despite the occasional erratic bit of behaviour from the odd disorientated bot, and the now

hugely dated graphics engine, which although slightly tweaked with better weapon models and more realistic particle effects, remains much the same. It's also the perfect training if you're a CS beginner, as you won't be

but deserving of a good score, which is why we've settled on 79 per cent. Had we been reviewing the CS bot game section on its own, you'd be looking at an Essential if not a Classic score.

"Even experienced CS players will appreciate the chance to try out the new weapons"

put off by playing against veterans online, while even experienced CS players will appreciate the chance to try out the new weapons, such as the near-impenetrable riot shield and the FAMAS and Galil machine guns before risking using them online.

Valve - who (along with a new development company Turtle Rock Studios) is responsible for developing this part of the game - has shown up Ritual's shortcomings in the campaign missions with their sublime Al programming and unparalleled skill in creating superb games and gameplay.

So there you have it. Two games in one. One flawed, one available free (for HL owners),

Be warned. If you're buying this game for the 18 new single-player levels, think very, very hard. The campaign - just like the Blair Witch Project soundtrack (a film bereft of music), which was packed with songs 'inspired' by the movie - is a game 'inspired' by Counter-Strike. A barely passable shooter trying to pass as Counter-Strike, whose missions act as little more than a diversion from the sublime bot-filled Counter-Strike levels in which you can finally live the life of a counter-terrorist (or terrorist),

"Honey, set the video for

Neighbours, I may be home quite late tonight..."

While the graphical tweaks for Counter-Strike are minimal, the effects and models have received a polish.

What happened? Did I die and wake up in an alternate universe? Condition Zero been previewing up to the point that Ritual took it over. Sure, they said they were completely rewriting it but I didn't think that meant completely changing the concept of the game as well. Instead of single-player Counter-Strike, Condition Zero is a bog-standard firstnerson shooter that shares a few cosmetics with the great online game but plays very differently. (Linear, hardly any teamplay, overly scripted and very poor Al in places.)

Thank the Lord then for the new bots that you can play vanilla Counter-Strike with, which enable you to play CS (or learn to play it if you've been in outer space for the past few years) in the comfort of your own home and without any fear of being humiliated and/or insulted, or even logging onto the Net.

None of the CZ maps are included (they're built completely differently) so effectively you're paying for a solid set of bots to play Counter-Strike with. And seeing as they're going to be released free with the Version 1.6 download in the next month or so, I'd say that Condition Zero is strictly for the CS completist. One thing's for sure though, it's not the game I thought I was going to be playing a few weeks back. Roll on Half-Life 2.

WHAT KIND OF A CS **PLAYER ARE YOU?**





JUST ANSWER THESE SIMPLE QUESTIONS TO FIND **OUT JUST HOW DEDICATED A PLAYER YOU ARE...**

- . While buying weapons,
- A) Hide behind a crate. You can never be too careful. (1 point)
- B) Buy your favourite weapons without a fuss. (2 points)
- (C) Apply war paint to your real-life self thus passing on the chance to buy anything.
- 3. You hear the words 'enemy spotted' come over the radio.
- A) Hide behind a crate. You can never be too careful. (1 point)
- B) Approach the next corner with caution, ready to engage. (2 points)
- C) Select your knife and try to perform a crude form of surgery on the bowels of the first enemy or friendly unit (they all deserve to die) you see, then hang their still twitching corpse from a tree by their entrails. (3 points)

- 2. The opposition has planted the bomb. You are the last surviving counterterrorist. Do you...
- A) Hide behind a crate. You can never be too careful. (1 point)
- B) Approach the bomb site quietly and assess the situation. (2 points)
- (C) Write to the opposition telling them where you are. that you have no weapons, and that you'll take them all on and still manage to defuse the bomb. Oh, and that you've had their sisters and they were crap. (3 points)

s: You're a snivelling little shit, with more camp than Dale Winton and less guts than a grilled fish. points: You're a wellbalanced player who can mix it with the best of them, without going too far. professional help. Now.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Great bots to play
- Counter-Strike with offline New weapons
- Play online with bots and humans
- Excellent training tool for online sessions
- X Cliched, glitched, dated and unoriginal single-player campaign
- X Clipping problems throughout



Would have been **Essential had the** essential part not been available free

to the land of opportunity

But be on your guard - your successful conquest of America may be short lived. Even if you can gain a foothold as a Spanish conqueror, defend your ancestral lands against the white settlers, survive the war of independence and build the first trans-continental railroad there's also the merciless bounty hunter who is after your head.









PC Gaming World

"Strategy fans should keep a close eye on No Man's Land"

Gamespot

"What we've seen of No Man's Land so far indicates that the game should offer something new and different to fans of real-time strategy games who are weary of the fantasy, modern, and science fiction themes so prevalent in the genre."

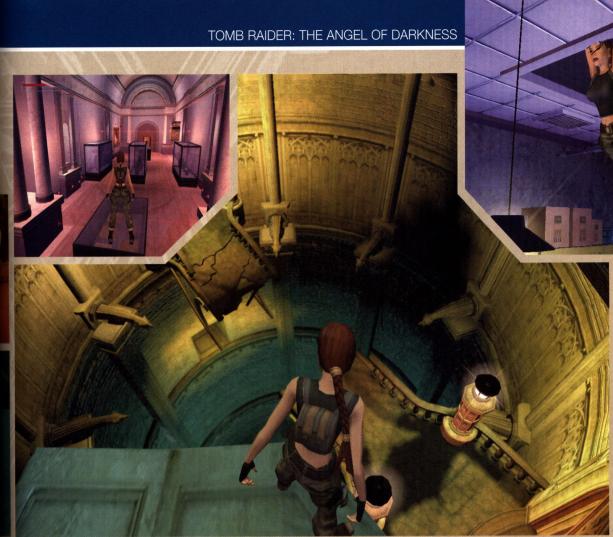


www.nomans-land.com

Released August 2003

TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS





Lara my dear, you're going to die more than once before the day is over.

frequently enjoyable game, with some superb platform/puzzlebased sequences, a compelling storyline and more than passable graphical standards.

So if you haven't played the game yet, forget everything vou've been told. It's not as bad as you might have been led to believe.

ONE NIGHT IN PARIS

For a start, let me just remind you what we're dealing with here. This is Lara Croft. Tomb Raider. This is no flash in the pan marsupial action hero, we're talking about the world's most recognised gaming character

(well, one of the top ten anyway). That means big budget, big production values and big expectations. And from the moment you start up the game, you can see where a lot of the money has gone - the cinematics are lavish, the voiceacting superior, the soundtrack equal to any Hollywood blockbuster. The graphics are not mind-blowing perhaps, but the architecture is well put together and everything animates smoothly.

The storyline too is better than most. The game opens with Lara on the run from the cops in the back streets of Paris,

"She still walks like a cowboy and crawls like she's auditioning for Butt Pirates 6"

accused of killing her former mentor and not so sure she didn't actually do it. A search for the truth soon evolves into a hunt for some mysterious paintings, taking Lara through the Paris sewers, the Louvre, an ancient underground temple, Prague and eventually to the sprawling lair of a powerful underground sect. The plot bounces along nicely and there's a few twists and turns in there,

though it inevitably resorts to the same old adventure-game clichés, trotting out the Knights Templar, the bible and at least one alchemic doomsday device.

POSH

However, posh production values do not a game make, and within seconds of the actual gameplay commencing it's apparent something is horribly amiss. Lara is standing a bit



Has it really been four years since Lara sashaved her absurdly proportioned body across our screens? From playing Angel Of Darkness, you wouldn't necessarily think so. While the old bird has clearly taken care of herself in the interim, and still looks the business, she does seem a little set in her ways. despite all the boasting of revolutionary gameplay. Much of this has now been retracted, and rightly so, as this is simply Tomb Raider, no more no less. The alleged role-playing elements are

risible - Lara breaks something, Lara gets

stronger - and the dialogue is

largely inane, with the wrong

leading to instant death. And

you don't play Tomb Raider

to control some chin-gloved

soap-dodger called Kurtis

case of the time-honoured

gameplay, with all the puzzle-

solving, lever-pulling, ledge-

grabbing, monkey-swinging,

entails. Same as it ever was.

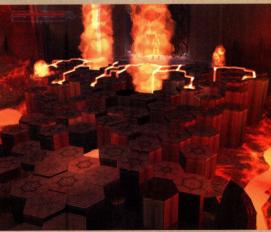
tooth-grinding action that

Trent. Ultimately, it's a

frustration and reward

answer on one occasion

A few minutes later, however, climbing, jumping and searching through cupboards, and it's clear this is no laughing matter. Lara doesn't just look awkward, she handles like a boat. It's a sluggish, unresponsive control system and one that seems incredibly dated, especially after the likes of Splinter Cell has raised the bar for third-person action on the PC. When I reviewed that game, I recall describing a sequence of moves



For once Lara's choice of outfit seams justified.



Lara now does ragdoll deaths, so it's tempting to just jump.

to try and convey how fluid and intuitive the game was, something along the lines of: "sneak a little, shoot out the lights, shimmy, shimmy, zipline, rappel..." With Lara it's more like "rotate left, rotate right, shuffle forwards, rotate left, bounce off wall. Back up a step, hit action button - Oh My God I managed to pick up a chocolate bar!"

Luckily, you're somewhat eased into the pain of the interface by the game's learning curve. Whether by accident or design, the opening portion of the game has a more adventureweighted feel than anything Lara has done before, with a lot more talking to the denizens of Paris and traipsing backwards and forwards than pushing blocks or shooting bears.

SAVING GRACE

Once the game gets into full swing, however, it's classic Tomb Raider action. Running, swinging, climbing, swimming, exploring - and dying over and over again trying to time a tricky jump (though luckily there's no limits on saving). While you're forced to wrestle with the interface throughout (and dying because of it more often than not), there are good sequences as well as bad. The Louvre

AN EMBARRASSMENT OF GLITCHES



Some of the bugs in AoD are genuinely funny.

MORE BUGS THAN AN MI6 SWAPMEET

There's no two ways about it: Angel Of Darkness is not a finished game, and has so many bugs and glitches you'll give up counting after a while. Some of our particular favourites include the invisible shotgun - it's there on your back, but not in your hands! (sadly this was fixed in a recent patch), the invisible door - it's got a handle, it's got a window, but where's the door? The sudden instant death room - where you drop dead for no apparent reason, and the maddening mouse reversal mystery - which arbitrarily inverts the X-axis on your mouse (as if the interface wasn't enough of a struggle).

Then there's the bits that can't really be classed as bugs, but where Core has desperately painted over the cracks in the rush to get the game on shelves. One of our favourites is a level in which some moody music from an early sewer level has been reused, complete with spooky lapping water sounds - despite the fact that you're in a very dry second floor apartment.

Needless to say, the patches are coming thick and fast, but we fear the damage has already been done.

"Quality Assurance was clearly not foremost on the publishers' minds"

level in particular is great fun jumping over and shimmying under a network of laser tripwires before getting trigger happy on a bunch of innocent night watchmen, while the diabolical series of puzzles in the Chamber of Seasons is classic precision-platforming fare.

In between these occasional high points however, are some of the most tiresome sequences ever seen in a Tomb Raider

game. A boss battle about halfway through the game must rank as one of the worst ever conceived, while the Prague levels are so banal they were obviously thrown in halffinished. Quality Assurance was clearly not foremost on the publishers' minds.

The new additions to Lara's repertoire are also of questionable value. Take the supposed stealth elements. Lara can now creep along walls like Solid Snake and move quietly while in 'stealth mode'. Unfortunately, the non-existent enemy Al makes such behaviour almost completely pointless, and the only real stealth moments involve edging past the occasional security camera. Likewise, the mooted RPG-style character development. One minute you can't move a block because it's too heavy, the next minute you can because you pushed the block next to it and made Lara stronger - it's completely scripted and adds little to the experience.



Kill them, electrocute them, it matters little.



Things get freaky towards the end of the game.

BUG HUNT

The second playable character, Kurtis Trent, is also a bit of a non-event. You don't get to play as him until the game is practically over, when he turns up to replace Lara for three levels. He also plays virtually identically to Lara, so any potential novelty is purely cosmetic.

Clearly, The Angel Of Darkness has its fair share of problems. It's unfinished, unpolished and unadventurous. Chances are it'll be remembered chiefly as one of the buggiest games ever released. (See also **Embarrassment Of Glitches** panel.) However, it is still Tomb



Climbing is one of the few things Lara has improved at.



PCZONE VERDICT

- Looks and sounds nice
- Some excellent set-pieces
- High quality story and dialogue X Horribly sluggish, outdated control system
- X A debacle of bugs and glitches
- Offers little if any novelty



Frequently enjoyable despite a litany of failures



WERE YOU a

little disappointed with

a bit of a let down after the

splendour of Morrowind, Well. dispel any doubts you may have

had, Bloodmoon feels like a completely different game.

is liberally sprinkled all over

INPERSPECTIVE

THE ELDER SCROLLS III:

Reviewed Issue 125. Score 80%

Tribunal was more an extension to

brings a totally different environment.

If you weren't too enamoured with

Tribunal don't let that put you off,

Reviewed Issue 114, Score 89%

If action is more important to you

Dungeon Siege is the way forward

than the finer details of an RPG,

with straightforward hack and

slash action from start to finish.

Bloodmoon is better.

DUNGEON SIEGE

Morrowind whereas Bloodmoon

TRIBUNAL

It's not just the snow that

Tribunal? Granted, it was impressive, but basically

THE ELDER SCROLLS III: BLOODNOON REQUIRES ORIGINAL: THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

■ £19.99 | Pub: Ubi Soft | Dev: Bethesda | ETA: Out Now | www.elderscrolls.com REQUIRES PIII 500, 256MB RAM and a 16MB 3D card DESIRES A P4 and a GeForce 3 or above is ideal

So you want to be a werewolf? Well, you're weird, but now you can be. Chris Anderson shows you how

Solstheim (the setting for the expansion), it's just about everything else too. New landscapes, lush and expansive forests, new NPCs, new weapons and armour - which is to be found in abundance (and is actually useful), as well as new monsters and colony-building. All of which adds up to a new experience for Morrowind fans. What's more, the quests are long and complex too, so you won't be finishing this one overnight.



There are two large guests to begin with. One you get from a captain in the fort you start the game in, and one from the boss of the nearby mining colony in Raven Rock. The mining quest sees you helping out an underthreat colony, eventually leading to you having a hand in building it up from a small one to a more prosperous one, directing a foreman to build new structures to expand the settlement as vou see fit.

This is a nice distraction from the main quest, which also has its own twists, one of which results in your transformation into a werewolf, which changes the entire combat mechanic and has the added bonus of enabling you to scare small children as you wander around the landscape.



NPCs accompany you on specific quests.

depending on your personal preference, you can choose to eliminate them or become one of them and spend your whole time terrorising the locals.

BLOODBATH

The first thing you'll notice when you venture out into the open forests and hills is that there are enemies everywhere. Bears, wolves, madmen, and that's just for starters, all of which will get on your case in doublequick time. If you're playing this expansion with a low-level character, enjoy your ten seconds of fun because that's



Lots of new wildlife lurks in the woods, none of it very friendly.

approximately how long you'll last. In other words, use your existing Morrowind character because you'll need a high-level one if you're going to make any headway in this expansion.

Bloodmoon may not be as compelling as Morrowind, but its varied and interesting content brings a breath of fresh air to an already excellent series, and once it sinks its teeth into you, its unlikely to let go until you have completed it.



✓ Completely new island

Excellent new weapons and items

You get to be a werewolf

X Slow frame rates in snowstorms

The legend lives on





The Orc campaign is disappointing



New buildings allow you to hire mercenaries and ships.



Enemies are big, bold and bolshy. But if it all gets too much, you can turn the difficulty down.

WARCRAFT III THE FROZEN THRON

■ £19.99 | Pub: Vivendi Universal | Dev: Blizzard Entertainment | ETA: Out Now | www.blizzard.co.uk

REQUIRES P2 400, 128MB BAM, 8Mb 3D video card DESIRES P4 1.5GHz, 512MB RAM 64Mb 3D video card and a broadband connection for multiplayer on battle.net

FULL VERSION OF WARCRAFT III REQUIRED



Keith Pullin discovers that you can't beat a frozen throne on a hot summer's day

WHEN BLIZZARD

Entertainment produces an expansion pack it's usually done properly. Over the years Warcraft, Starcraft and Diablo II have all been blessed with superb addon packs; Warcraft III: The Frozen Throne now continues that trend in glorious fashion.

This 26 mission continuation of the number one fantasy RTS

on the PC offers more of everything in every department. There are more units per faction (with a particular focus on spell casting and aerial units), there's more graphical variety in the landscapes, the maximum army size has increased and the hero limit is now four instead of three. And of course, there's

INPERSPECTIVE

AGE OF MYTHOLOGY Reviewed Issue 123, Score 90% For a great story and a campaign covering numerous species Age Of Mythology is fantastic. However, units are nowhere near as interesting as in The Frozen Throne and gameplay becomes repetitive near the end.

DIABLO II

Reviewed Issue 93, Score 72% We're not saying Diablo II is a RTS; it's just that TFT contains subquests that are surprisingly similar to Diablo II's gameplay. It's also one of the few games to rival TFT's multiplayer support.

more of that epic story...

DEMON GAMEPLAY

Events in The Frozen Throne take place several months after the defeat of Archimonde and the Burning Legion at Mount Hyjal. The latest twist concentrates on the nefarious intentions of the deceitful half-demon Illidan and the death knight Arthas and their mission to overthrow the shattered tribes of Azeroth and claim the

scarred world

as their own.

The campaign allows you to control three races. You start as the Night Elf Sentinels, then move on to the Human Alliance before finally taking over as Arthas and his Undead Horde.

Curiously, there is no significant Orc chapter to the campaign: however there is a short Diablo-esque RPG bonus campaign where you control a half Orc, half Ogre Beastmaster as well as a kind of half Orc, half Rastafarian shaman known as a Shadow Hunter.

Level design is enormously varied. The hero-based action sequences of the kind mentioned above are frequent and make for refreshing diversions from the usual base-

> building/busting exploits. But even slow-burning, resource focused levels contain more fleshy mini-quests

> > than Warcraft III. The great thing is you're constantly encouraged to try out new heroes and their



At last - naval combat. Just don't expect too much of it.

special abilities. The Night Elf hero Maiev for example has the ability to 'blink' meaning she can reach previously inaccessible parts of the map in order to search for mana/gold/health and other useful bonuses.

SEA MONSTERS

The introduction of new buildings is another huge gameplay improvement. You can now hire mercenary units such as Giant Turtles and Orc Hermits from outposts dotted around the landscape. And for the first time ever in Warcraft III boats are available. OK, with just two nautical units to choose from, it's not exactly Rise Of Nations, but what the hell - it's naval combat, sort of.

And to round things off, frequent visitors to Battle.net will be delighted to hear that the whole multiplayer aspect has been radically overhauled. New skirmish maps, clan options and tournaments are there for your never-ending pleasure.

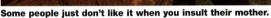
The only downside in what is clearly a work of sublime beauty is the £20 price tag. But you get what you pay for, and with this you are getting an awful lot, so ultimately it's more than worth it. In short, your copy of Warcraft III is not complete until you get The Frozen Throne. It really is that good.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Continuation of the excellent story
- New units and buildings for all four featured races
- New monsters and mercenaries
- ✓ 26 extra missions ✓ Improved multiplayer options on Battle.net
- X No proper Orc campaign

A highly polished throne





■ £29.99 | Pub: Atari | Dev: Piranha Bytes | ETA: Out Now | www.gothic2.com

REQUIRES PIII 300, 256MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card DESIRES PIII 1.2GHz, 512MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card (Tip: Make sure effects slider is at 300 per cent instead of the normal 100 for full view distance.)

James Lyon dies his hair black and gets stuck into this epic RPG sequel

IT'S NOT hard to get an eerie feeling of déjà vu after playing this, the sequel to Piranha Byte's often overlooked roaming RPG. Acting as a stopgap before the arrival of the better-known Morrowind, the first Gothic didn't stand much of a chance in the wake of that title's hype. A shame really, because it was a good effort with some cracking scenery; the enormous pastoral landscapes that covered the original's confined setting were a real sight to behold. Unfortunately, the game as a whole was let down by a lack of focus and a slow-moving difficulty curve, and while the sequel addresses some points of contention, in more ways than

INPERSPECTIVE

THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

Reviewed Issue 117, Score 94% This stat-heavy rival wins the contest with its sheer scope of gameplay variety. Gothic II fights back by not having to wade through huge lists of numbers and stupid fantasy names.

DUNGEON SIEGE Reviewed Issue 115, Score 89% Bollocks to the plot, Hack, hack, hack, hack, hack (and slash). Gauntletastic!



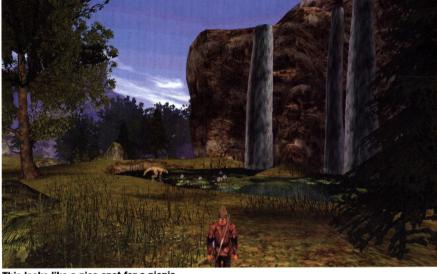
one it still invites some of the same criticisms.

Let's talk landscape first, since this is one of the game's best points. Gorgeous and twice as big as the first, strolling around the rolling landscape, glancing at the setting sun glint around the wooded glades, carping askew thy swamps and

clifftops - it really brings out the William Wordsworth in me. (William Shatner, more like - Ed.) Your initial quest sees you foraging with no reason to go beyond a relatively small area still huge, mind - so you'll often find yourself impressed when you take a wander off the beaten track. A little strolling before



See what you can find when you go off looking?



This looks like a nice spot for a picnic.

typing this, for instance, and I came across a whacking great temple in a valley I'd never seen before. All praise must go to the map designers who've managed to come up with a world that feels natural and varied enough not to become repetitive. And it's all been done without the intermittent immersion-breaking loading times of Morrowind.

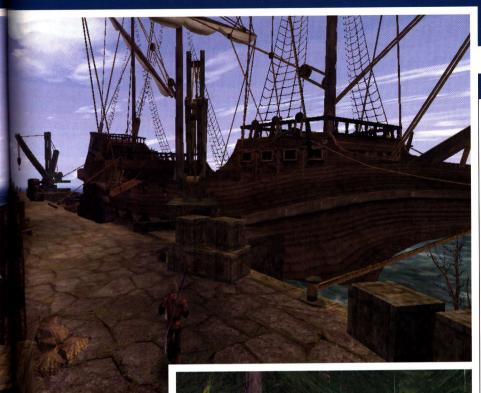
Exploring is a real treat, especially when you find something totally new. However, with the only form of transport being your two feet, not even the most picturesque of locations can relieve the tedium of some of the longer journeys.

A LONG WINDING ROAD

Don't expect to walk around willy-nilly from the off, either. It may be a non-linear experience, but wander down the wrong path and you won't last long, because it's bloody hard.

Despite being set only a couple of weeks after your first adventure, your hero seems to have lost all knowledge of his skills and most early encounters lead to certain death.

As you'd expect, fighting brings with it experience, and you'll need plenty of the latter before you even think about facing up to the bigger creatures. Unfortunately, while the combat system's been given a little workout, it's still the weakest part of the game. While hacking away at one enemy isn't a problem, get into a fight with more opponents and the poor targeting system makes it difficult to focus your attacks. Running away, too, proves harder, as you often get twisted into facing a direction you don't want to go in. Best to stand back with a bow or let them come to you individually and pick them off one by one.



Look at that ship.

That may be a good way to up your levels but it's a laborious task. Entertainment requires supplementing it with quests and, again, like the first Gothic, there's a lot to get through before you feel like you're getting anywhere.

HACK 'N' SLASH

Your first real task is to retrieve an important artefact, which can only be achieved by becoming a member of the militia, which can only be achieved by becoming a citizen, which can only be achieved by getting the approval of the tradesmen, which can only be achieved by pleasing their needs and so on. So much so, that you soon forget what the first point was as you run around trying to please

cash being so valuable, you're best spreading yourself around in order to have a decent chance

Other characters help out if you get in trouble near them.

of levelling up. To this end, it constantly feels as if you're slowly chipping away at the edges of the game instead of making a beeline through it.

The main plot revolves around an army of orcs and dragons threatening the land, infuriating, there are benefits. such as countless hours of gameplay. In fact, the more you put in, the more Gothic II will give you in return. *Déjà vu* again. To forge mindlessly ahead with the main plot would be missing everything else there is to see and you never reach tolerance point before some new quest or

THE BEAT GOES ON

After the interface improvements and a graphical upping, it really is much the same game on a bigger scale, and for that reason alone it surpasses its predecessor. While there's nothing conspicuously new in structure, Piranha Bytes has spent time tidying the game up to make this

plot-twist starts to address itself.

GIVE 'EM WHAT THEY WANT

SOME SEX PLEASE. WE'RE GERMAN



"So how about it then, do you fancy a quick one?"

Proving that there's still room for a bit of tawdry softcore in a European RPG, there's a brothel down by the harbour where punters are encouraged to 'have some fun' all at the cost of 50 gold coins. Fair enough, except that it leads to an FMV sequence that's as unnecessary as it is incongruous. Not that we don't love a bit of titillation, it's more that it seems a bit of a pointless addition completely out of sorts with the rest of the game. And it's one to rival Nomad Soul's infamous fully-clothed love scene in terms of trouser arousal as our chap doesn't actually bother getting his kit off. Not the best 'Easter Egg' of the game, though. Five I-Spy points if you find the conversation in which the actor starts to unintentionally talk off-scene about his voice direction.



I don't fancy my chances.

a definitive continuation. It's a respectable RPG and those of a more patient nature should really warm to it as it features a glorious circumstance of graphics and gameplay along with a confluence of exploration and experience points. In other words: looks great, plays fine. Just don't expect instant

Bigger and more compelling than the first

PCZONE VERDICT

Takes a while for the plot to get going

✓ Gorgeous scenery

✓ Non-linear exploration

Slow levelling-up process Weak combat

Virtual tourism in a tough, drawn-out but excellent RPG

"You'll often find yourself impressed when you take a wander off the beaten track"

minor NPCs to up your stats. However, the level of immersion and the feeling of involvement within the gaming world benefits Gothic greatly, and it's not too long before you start to feel a genuine part of this RPG's world.

However, the above method isn't the only way to go about discovering new things, though. Other quests give you the opportunity to choose a path that eventually culminates in a guild and career of your choice. With

experience points and







Pitstops are crucial in the longer races.



Chequered Flag on the Spectrum, anyone?

"Split-second precision is called for, as the speed of the game is highly impressive"

"Take the next left, then left again."

INDYCAR SERIES

■ £29.99 | Pub: Codemasters | Dev: Brain In A Jar | ETA: July 4 | www.codemasters.com/indycarseries

REQUIRES PIII 700, 128MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card DESIRES P4 1.4GHz, 256MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card

Resident driving expert Steve Hill gets around to some more racing practice

WE'VE DONE the gags in Reality Check (see page 96) so let's crack on with the facts. *Indy Car Racing* is a bastard hybrid of Formula One and NASCAR, and *IndyCar Series* (made in Cheshire) is a comprehensive simulation of the popular American sport. And while much of the marketing has been aimed towards our Stateside allies, it shouldn't be dismissed over here simply because we know nothing about the sport.

INPERSPECTIVE

NASCAR RACING SEASON 2003

Reviewed Issue 128, Score 55% Same tracks, different cars. Same meat, different gravy,

GRAND PRIX 4

Reviewed Issue 119, Score 86% Similar looking cars, and at least you get to turn right. Just as hardcore, but the diversity makes it much more enjoyable.

All you really need to know is that the cars travel in excess of 230mph on a series of left-hand ovals, and that the races are very. very long. Naturally, truncated versions are on offer here - from 10 laps and upwards - and it is wise to start with reduced length races, unless of course you are serving a medium to long-term custodial sentence. IndvCar Series falls comfortably into the genre of 'Prison Gaming', in so much that nobody outside of Her Majesty's Pleasure will be able to find enough hours in the day to enjoy it to the full. Even so, anyone thinking of attempting a full-length race might be advised to consider some kind of horse tranquilliser.

The antithesis of a throwaway arcade game, concentration is paramount and the key skill involves sticking to the racing line like shit to a blanket. Making up tenths of a second on the car in front, it can often be like the gaming equivalent of watching a progress bar. Patience is required though, as an overambitious manoeuvre can set you back a few seconds, which can in turn take several laps to claw back.

GETTING AHEAD

Overtaking has to be planned days in advance, and it is perfectly feasible to remain wheel-to-wheel with an opponent for a couple of laps. Getting a decent position on the grid is crucial,

and with only two qualifying laps available, it is worth familiarising yourself with the tracks beforehand. Believe it or not, there are marked differences between them.

RESPECT

In easy mode, your car is invulnerable and you can largely bludgeon your way to the front. But it's a measure of how much respect the game instills that you won't want to, preferring instead to wait for an opening and use skill and timing. Split-second precision is called for, as the speed of the game is impressive, with the scenery flashing past in a mildly terrifying blur.

Clearly a labour of love, the attention to detail is almost perverse, with one of the circuits offering less downforce and slipstreaming due to it being a mile above sea level. The realism continues under the bonnet, and almost every aspect can be

tweaked, assuming of course you're a fully trained mechanic. Laden with extras, including a Masterclass and unlockable footage of the history of the sport, there is enough here to make you go blind. Not everyone's bag admittedly, but if you accept the challenge of the mind-numbing action, it's oddly satisfying. Skeeter, pass me the horse tranquilliser.



76 PCZONE

HOMEWORLD2



RELEASE DATE: 12th September 2003

Available on PC CD ROM

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producer CHRIS MAHNKEN executive producer DAN IRISH art director ROB CUNNINGHAM
original concept by ALEX GARDEN marketing by THE WEASEL

relic



ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 2: WACKY WORLDS EXPANSION PACK

■ £19.99 | Pub: Atari | Dev: Chris Sawyer | ETA: Out Now | www.rollercoastertycoon2.com

REQUIRES PII 300, 64Mb RAM and a 4Mb 3D card DESIRES PIII 500, 128Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card

Steve Hill makes himself sick again with more rollercoaster building madness

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 2



God Bless America.



There are countless themes for you to choose from when constructing your rides.

IN THESE HEADY

days of high-speed interwebs and DIY modifications, the expansion pack is becoming increasingly marginalised. Why fork out for a few 'official' levels when there are usually countless free ones available for download through your phat pipe? The answer is either that you've got money to burn or are a massive fan of the game.

It's the latter group that Wacky Worlds will primarily interest, as if you've exhausted RollerCoaster Tycoon 2, this may briefly bring back the old spark. As the name suggests, there's a geographical bent,

with scenarios drawn from a series of unlikely locations based on the seven continents. of Earth. So for instance, you may find yourself building a park straddling the Grand Canyon, kicking out a few native Americans in the process. Also included among the 17 scenarios are such recognisable landmarks as the Statue of Liberty, Big Ben, the Eiffel Tower, the Great Wall of China, and the Leaning Tower of Pisa, with the European locations seemingly thrown together after a quick tour of Las Vegas, which is the closest most Americans come to leaving the country.

And? Rudimentary graphical representations of familiar sights aside, it makes not a jot of difference to the gameplay. Identical to the original game, it is by turns immensely frustrating and annoyingly moreish.

SAME GAME

The new scenarios are all very well, but we can't help feeling the time could've been better spent addressing some of the issues in RollerCoaster Tycoon 2. The interface is far from perfect, and tackling some of the more intricate path building is like trying to plait snot, enough to make you shout out loud in anger.



Place your coaster next to things like The Great Wall of China



Welcome to Morecambe.

And besides, much of the fun in RollerCoaster Tycoon 2 (or indeed the near-identical original) lies in building a park from scratch rather than taking over someone else's effort. Admittedly, some of the scenarios do effectively allow you to do this, but simply sticking an Incan City in the corner of the map doesn't make it a new game.

LET'S PLAY GOLF!

Fanatics may be thrilled to learn there are more than 50 new rides and 200 "new game elements," but to be honest, you'd be hardpressed to recognise them. It's not all bad though, and even I have to concede that designing my own 18-hole mini-golf course ranks as one my proudest gaming moments.

Ultimately, all this expansion pack does is remind you that RCT 2 exists, and encourages you to give it another spin. Whether this warrants shelling out £20 is debatable.

INPERSPECTIVE

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 2

Reviewed Issue 123, Score 80% More than enough fun on its

own without needing to buy the expansion

THEME PARK INC

Reviewed Issue 100, Score 50%

More rollercoaster-based shenanigans, except not nearly as good.



That'll be England then

PCZONE VERDICT

A few fairly good new options

X Same old, same old ✗ Overpriced

Should be free



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PlayStation_®2



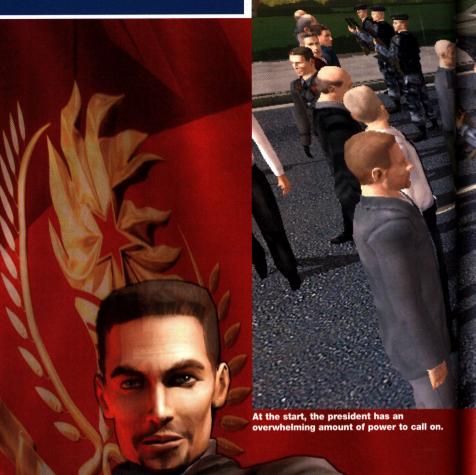


GENIUS AT PLAY"



Corruption is rife in Novistrana - so take advantage of it.





JBLIC: REVOLUTIO

Price: £39.99 | Dev: Elixir Studios | Pub: Eidos Interactive | ETA: Out Now | www.novistrana.com REQUIRES PIII 800MHz, 256MB RAM, 32MB 3D card DESIRES P4 2.5GHz, 5 2MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card

Be afraid. Paul Presley has just been handed the reigns of power. It may only be a virtual city now, but once he's got a taste of power...



INPERSPECTIVE

GTA: VICE CITY

Reviewed Issue 131, Score 95% Also models a fully working 3D real-time city but that's as far as the similarity goes. Except for the massive amounts of corruption on offer of course. It's more in-yourface action than a thoughtful exploration of power.

SIMCITY 4

Reviewed Issue 125, Score 80% More city-based power dealing. albeit in a more constructive style than Republic. Rather than wresting the reigns of power from without. you're plunged in at the deep end and have to build a utopia of your very own

NOW PAY ATTENTION

class, we're having a little test (sit down at the back, no one leaves till the bell rings). Do the following names and phrases mean anything to you? Hagbard Celine. Immanentizing the Eschaton. Igor Komarov and Jason Monk. The Illuminati. INWO. Mr Phelps and the IMF. Floor 13. Niccolo Machiavelli, Fnord.

If you recognised at least half of those then chances are you'll have had the kind of grounding that has set you up perfectly for Republic: The Revolution. If you thought I was merely throwing random words at your face, then I'm sure there are some pages with Lara Croft's new buttocks around here somewhere to keep you entertained.

You see there hasn't been a game that has so divided the opinions of players since Black & White, appropriate enough since Republic has been masterminded by one of B&W creator Peter Molyneux's own protégés, Demis Hassabis, along with his team at Elixir Studios.

In fact, they've been masterminding it for so damn long now that the real world

has seen more unprecedented political upheavals than this virtual simulation can ever hope to mirror. All the in-game actions that you can carry out in your quest for power pale in comparison to the kinds of machinations that saw Robert Mugabe outlaw democracy in the 'republic' of Zimbabwe; a talking monkey in a suit take hold of the US presidency thanks to some friends of his dad; and the Goodge Street Adult Import Emporium be supplanted by the 78th branch of Starbucks to take root within a one mile radius of Tottenham Court Road tube station.

EVIL GENIUS

People will either love Republic or hate Republic and never the twain will meet. It's a game you will either 'get' or you won't, those that do marvelling in the exploration of subversive



ir power grows, so do the available actions

bandying phrases such as "boring" and "Emperor's New Clothes" about with gayer abandon than a neglected Norton. Those latter folk are, of course, wrong and should be

put to death immediately in

order to teach others a lesson

sorry, prolonged exposure to

power, those that don't

R:TR tends to affect your ethical viewpoint a bit).

While it's easy to look at it as a game of numbers. resource gathering and basic RTS concepts, these numbers are actually simulating realworld social, class and moral dynamics closer than anything seen before. To be an effective

Novistrana (Republic's fictional Eastern European setting, where Sims-speak is the official spoken language and vaguely Cyrillic backward nonsense is the written) requires an understanding of proletariat manipulation. Which probably explains why most of my efforts

power broker in the world of

"Republic simulates realworld social, class and moral dynamics closer than ever"

saw rallies attended by three tramps and a pigeon, while if someone like Peter Mandelson played it, the computer would probably explode trying to keep up with his schemes and plots.

BUT WHAT IS IT?

Well, there's the million dollar question. What you get is essentially an extremely advanced board game. Each character you recruit to your cause has a number of actions (student activists can carry out poster or leafleting campaigns for instance, local hoodlums can intimidate opponents through violence), one of which can be carried out in each of the day's three time periods. Each action is presented from

within the 3D engine, with the player able to apply subtle influences to help things reach a satisfactory conclusion.

The key is to carry out actions that increase your support with the local inhabitants, this support being converted into resources (money, influence and strength). Build up enough support, take

over the country. Easy.

Except it's cleverer than that. You don't just say "Support me" and receive blind devotion in return. Just like in real life, public ideology differs from one part of town to the next. Just as you wouldn't hold a National Front rally in the upper class areas of Kensington & Chelsea, neither

LIKE-MINDED SOULS

A HAPPY REVOLUTIONARY IS AN EFFECTIVE REVOLUTIONARY

A side effect of the social simulation at work here is that all of the game's key personnel also have their own ideologies - crucial when it comes to recruiting effective tools, er... converts to your cause. Get it wrong and, as was the case with one of my early inductees, they'll feel at odds with your aims and start moping about instead.

It got to the point with my chap that no amount of consoling or personality boosting measures were cheering him up, and I genuinely felt pangs of guilt and sorrow as I reluctantly let the old school friend leave my faction after serving me so well. I felt even worse as I then sent in my corrupt police chief to beat the crap out of the miserable little shit in order to keep him quiet. Harsh maybe, but there's no room for mawkish sentiment en route to the top in this world.



Cheer up mate, or we'll send the boys round.

would you host a gala fund raising dinner in the gritty council estates of Moss Side.

That's how it works in Novistrana. You have to judge your actions to suit the local ethos, otherwise you'll find your support base disintegrating faster than the Tories during the Hague years. Master that and you then have to worry about keeping hold of that support, getting and staying ahead of the other parties looking for power, dealing with the fallout of rivals' smear tactics, and staying one step ahead of the corrupt president's forces, who aren't above a spot of murder and sabotage if that's what it takes to keep them in power.

WHINE, WHINE, WHINE

The biggest complaint

people seem to have

is that the swanky

3D engine is being

it is (see Missed

doesn't make the

less impressive.

Where

excels

Republic

underused. Well yes,

Opportunity), but that

part of the game any

aforementioned strategy

is that you can grasp power in any way you see fit. Forming a legitimate opposition party is just as much fun as starting a violent crime family or starting a new religion.

If that all sounds a bit too free-form, relax. You are guided with certain objectives along the way, the freedom comes in how you decide to reach them. Being told to garner support in an area is one thing. Whether you do that by handing out pamphlets espousing the merits of freedom and democracy, or sending out thugs to kick peoples' heads in then blaming your opponents is entirely another.

What will surprise

most people about all this is just how engaging it all actually is, assuming



Finding out about your enemies is absolutely vital.

you're into power games in the first place. Which is why you'll find people that will hate Republic. We've grown up on a diet of point and click 'strategy', from the first C&C right up to Rise Of Nations, which aren't really strategy games at all but just exercises in attrition. Republic, for perhaps one of the first times in gaming history, is presenting

Personally, I have never been so captivated by a strategy game. Republic has levels of depth and subtle complexity that have not been seen in computer games before. In a world of identikit sequels and genre cash-ins, games that dare to be as unique as this deserve every plaudit you can throw at them. It's just such a shame that for the same

"Games that dare to be this unique deserve every plaudit you can throw at them"

you with real-world dynamics to contend with, something that won't appeal to everyone.

Those that do find such things a turn on, though, will have the time of their lives.

reasons that I love it, others will find themselves hating it. But then that's exactly the kind of social dynamic that Republic itself simulates. Smarter and smarter and smarter... [EE]



SECOND OPINION

KEITH PULLIN

I love the way Republic flouts all the rules of alternative strategy games by actually being very easy to get into. Unfortunately, this is largely due to the fact that it has virtually no depth and is very repetitive. For some reason, while I'm playing I'm constantly reminded of Gangsters 2, and that thought alone is enough to send a shudder down anyone's spine.

I also hate the way the beautiful 3D graphics engine is completely redundant. In fact, you never have to move away from the overhead 2D map of the city - you can literally start and complete the game from there. It actually feels more like a board game than an original PC strategy game.

Sorry if I sound harsh, but this really is one of the most disappointing games I've ever played. Ultimately, history will show that Republic was nothing more than a great engine (which surely must be reused properly) with questionable gameplay.

MISSED OPPORTUNITY



The People's Republic of Vice City?

WITH GRAPHICS THIS GOOD, WHO NEEDS ENEMIES?

"Republic mixed with GTA: Vice City. Online." From the mouths of babes (well, editorial assistants at any rate) will often fall moments of inspired genius. Yes, Republic has an amazing 3D engine for simulating its cities. And yes, it's criminally underused. You do have the option of entering the world at any point and swooping around like a mad thing, but other than getting a visual impression of your potential populace, there's little point. Which is a shame as one of the early concepts for the game had you in direct FPS-style control of your main hero. But then that would have made it an entirely different game.



You can't be afraid of getting your hands dirty in this line of wo



Coloured numbers show the predominant ideology of an area.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Incredible levels of social complexity
- ✓ Requires genuine strategic thought
- X Not what people were expecting
- X Underuses the 3D engine
- X Only clever people will enjoy it



Sorry about this but... revolutionary







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GAMES

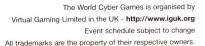
WORLD CYBER











PREMIER MANAGER 2002/2003

■ £29.99 | Dev: Tuna Technologies | Pub: Zoo Digital ETA: Out Now | www.zoodigitalpublishing.com

REQUIRES PIII 600, 128MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card DESIRES 256MB RAM and a 64Mb 3D card

Who says games have lost the power to surprise us? This one had Mark Hill in shock



The bulk of the match is played in this Spectrum view.

meetings with everyone a real manager would: press, coaches, scouts, chairmen and so on. You want to sell a player? You meet with his agent and select from a few conversation options. You want to set up a website? You talk to the commercial manager and do the same. It sounds like an intriguing idea at first, until you realise the whole game is turned into a meeting simulator. And don't go thinking it's some sort of adventure game, because there are no personalities or proper

dialogue beyond the repetitive stock phrases.

THE MEET OF THE GAME

However, at least each character shows a modicum of emotion depending on what you say to them, and there are plenty of dialogue options for each conversation, even if they are uninspiring. You can choose to skip meetings but then you get told off by the chairman and threatened with the sack

Tuna Technologies seem to primarily be GameBoy and mobile phone game developers,

and it shows. It might be a conversion of a PS2 title, but it looks closer to a shoddy Megadrive one. And if the graphics are an affront to the 21st century, then the interface is a violation of basic human rights. It really is that awful.

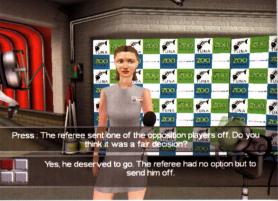
But it's not just that. There's no room to list all the gameplay flaws (players sent off in preseason friendlies suspended at the start of the league, and so on) but it all pales beside the unendurable matches. Setting up your team is a nightmare, and you can forget tactics.

CRUEL WORLD

The worst part is you have to sit through the whole thing: pathetic matchstick representations and 3D highlights that don't look too

dire until you realise they're just scripted actions that happen again and again. It's supposed to be football management lite, but even easily accessible games need to be fun and rewarding. Sadly, this isn't.

Somehow they've finagled a deal with Eurosport to mock up their news page, but this really is such a shoddy release I almost feel compelled to start a campaign to stop anyone from buying it, as this is nothing more than an average conversion of a very poor PS2 game. But there's no time. The rope is ready. The noose is tight. Goodbye.





The closest thing to a good idea is interviews with the press.

AFTER PLAYING

Premier Manager I'm not sure what would be more appropriate. a review or a suicide note. After all, I've lost the will to live. I mean, I'd heard about the pressures of top-flight football managing, I just didn't realise they would result in an intense desire to rip my eyes out and stamp on my retinas in a desperate attempt to rub out the scarring impressions left by this game.

I assume this is a resurrection of the old Gremlin license (otherwise someone's going to be sued), so it's fitting that it looks, feels and plays like something released ten years ago.

The aimmick that's supposed to set this apart from anything else is that you have

INPERSPECTIVE

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 4 Reviewed Issue 128, Score 90%

Very bugged on release, but the patches are coming thick and fast, making this still the only management game really worth contemplating

TOTAL CLUB MANAGER 2003 Reviewed Issue 121, Score 77%

If you want 3D matches that don't look like they're running in DOS, then Total Club Manager 2003 is the one to go for

"The interface is a violation of basic human rights. It really is that awful"



Wow, it's almost like watching real football.



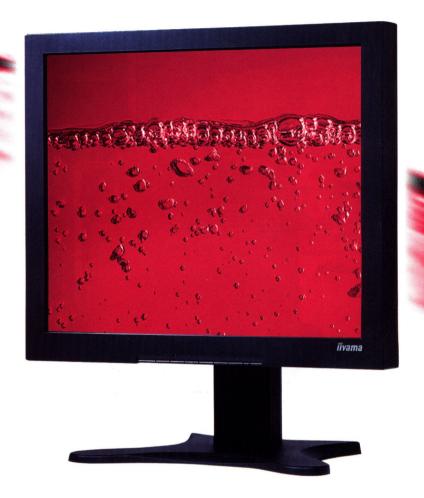
Yep, that really is the tactics screen.

PCZONE VERDICT The meeting idea is a good one in principle.. ...but is badly executed, over and over X Beyond awful interface and graphics



Would have been bad a decade ago. Now it's dreadful

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When your Rage meter fills up you can do extra damage.

Five, six, seven eight...

HULK

■ £34.99 | Pub: VU Games | Dev: Radical Entertainment | ETA: Out Now | www.hulkgames.com

REQUIRES PIII 700. 192MB RAM and a 32MB video card **DESIRES** P4 1GHz and 256MB RAM

Mark... Hill... must... contain... anger... while playing this filmlicensed action/adventure

SO ROLL on another summer blockbuster licensed game. Although Hulk comes with the anomaly of being released before the film. Developer Radical must have received a hefty bonus for getting it done in time; but then it's not as if they broke their backs on this one.

After my last encounter with a comic book hero, the talentless act of vandalism that was Wolverine's Revenge, Hulk comes across as a highlypolished title. But the truth is that this is a very simple and repetitive action game.

INPERSPECTIVE

SPIDERMAN: THE MOVIE Reviewed Issue 117, Score 79%

The controls aren't great, but swinging from one building to another is great fun, and this proves to be a half decent film-licensed game.

WOLVERINE'S REVENGE Reviewed Issue 130, Score 37%

Similar in some ways to the Hulk, although it's so shabbily put together you'll cry with rage. The story's not too bad though.

The Hulk has never been about brains, but even for a smash 'em up game, what passes as a plot is almost insulting. You start off being attacked by the army in the middle of the desert, then as Bruce Banner you break into a research lab, see another scientist get hulked up with gamma rays and then spend the rest of the game chasing him and swatting soldiers left, right and centre.

IT'S NOT EASY **BEING GREEN**

The few moments you don't spend pounding them to a pulp are when you control Bruce in a stealthy, sub-Metal Gear mode, that is just too dull to work. Sadly, these sections are so signposted they feel like tutorials: hiding places, levers and computer terminals are highlighted with big green arrows, just in case you're too stupid to figure out what to do.

For all the lack of depth in the gameplay, there is something undoubtedly cool about controlling this huge beast.

You can pick up cars and throw them at helicopters, smash the ground to cause shockwaves, throw people across the room, jump high in the air and send out beams of gamma radiation.

Was it something I said?

But it gets boring very quickly, partly because the enemies hardly change at all, and partly because the plain cardboard box environments make it less thrilling to demolish everything in sight.

problems that seem to hound

every console game slapped on to a PC. First, the camera want it to and, though you can see things through a useless first-person perspective, you have no control over the thirdperson view. Secondly, you

shouldn't even consider playing this unless you have a decent joypad. There's no mouse support and trying to control the Hulk with a keyboard is a waste of time. But then, it's not as if they needed a quality game to shift copies.



"There is something

undoubtedly cool about

"Now that's gotta hurt."

controlling this huge beast" rarely points in the direction you



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AQUANOX 2: REVELATION



■ £29.99 | Pub: Koch | Dev: Massive Development | ETA: September 19 | www.jowood.com

REQUIRES PIII 750, 128MB RAM (256MB on 2000/NT/XP) and a 32MB 3D Card DESIRES PIII 1 GHz, 256MB RAM and a 64MB 3D Card

Will Porter finds out that there's more to being underwater than retrieving a plastic brick from the deep end while wearing his pyjamas







The revelation, presumably, is they should've stayed on dry land.

IT'S NOT surprising we pump so much sewage and radioactive waste into the sea since it's never really given us anything half-decent [apart from fish - Ed]. For proof we only have to look as far as Seaguest DSV, Flipper, Stingray and The Little Mermaid - all of which were complete plankton-poo. And last-year's underwater-shooter Aguanox continued this trend. Badly translated, badly acted, badly made and stupidly green, the only people that liked it were the Germans.

INPERSPECTIVE

FREELANCER

....

Reviewed Issue 128, Score 84% Unless you are sick to your back teeth of fighting in space, Freelancer is still leagues ahead of Aquanox 2,

and won't make you as angry either. DEEP FIGHTER

Reviewed Issue 95, Score 53% Risible, dull and with piss-poor FMV, Deep Fighter reminds us that in the world of underwater combat Aguanox 2 is certainly the best of

A year and a bit later we have Aguanox 2: Revelation, and a distinct improvement it is too. The game takes place in the far future where human life exists only in the deep ocean and your character, William Drake, is the last of a great merchant-shipping dynasty searching for adventure beneath the seven seas.

Straight from the off, a bunch of gruff pirate types take over your ship and force you into working for them. Gradually you become part of the gang, running missions both for them and for various sailor types you meet hanging around the subaquatic city's docks.

NOT THAT SORT OF MISSION

The missions themselves are what sell the game. You can opt for a smooth FPS-based control system or, if you're a purist or entirely mad, you can switch realistic physics on that severely limit your craft's manoeuvrability and turning circle. You'll soon find yourself taking on basic



protecting your freighter in swirling dogfights, clearing mines and incapacitating passing ships with EMP before nicking their goodies. Once you've worked out the weapon system and how to upgrade your ship which takes a fair old while - the game really takes off. Weapons are satisfying,

too stupid and occasionally it becomes a truly exhilarating experience fighting alongside your shipmates against a common foe.

baddies aren't

THERE'S A 'BUT' COMING

Aquanox 2 is a good game with a good engine marred by presentation from the seventh prepare you for the vast array of laughable characters waiting to harangue you with a deluge of bizarre inter-mission warblings. After blasting some pirate scum you expect a reward, not a basic map of your ship and countless hours of rambling

conversation with cheesy characters. On average there are seven or eight mindless cretins that want to drone on and on at you after every mission, whining about destiny,

philosophy and madness in a badly translated monotone. The chief offender in this stunning display of mediocrity is your character William Drake himself, a man whose groin you'd gladly introduce to your boot if you met him at a social gathering.



You will hate this man.

There is a storyline that lurks somewhere in all this, but quite frankly you won't care as long as it allows you to carry on shooting things. It's a shame that the action takes place entirely at deep-sea level, and that there isn't any marine life for you to slaughter, but beneath the surface of leaden conversations and the deathly menu systems, a decent game lurks.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Nice change from spaceships Great underwater combat
- X Terrible interface system between missions
- Awful dialogue, awful acting X Occasionally feels like an
- underwater Dawson's Creek



Fun when it stops talking



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1 DEUS EX

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2 COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0

Still PCZONE's benchmark rally title, with a massive 85% rating, simply because there's no other game that comes close to replicating the experience. With amazing visuals and cars that handle superbly, this is a must for car-nuts.

3 GROUND CONTROL

Still considered an essential purchase (87%, PCZONE March 2003), Ground Control is a stunning real-time strategy game that gets everything right. Go in all-guns blazing, right from the start.



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NEIGHBOURS FROM HELL

■ £19.99 | Pub: JoWooD | Dev: JoWooD Productions | ETA: Out Now

REQUIRES P166, 64Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card **DESIRES** Any PII, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card

You want to hear about neighbours from hell? Talk to Keith Pullin



The old bare wire in a puddle trick - what laughs we had.

I TRULY doubt anybody has had as many neighbours from hell as me. First there was the stampeding, raging alcoholic upstairs; then the cocainedealing pimp downstairs and now I have the pill-dealing, boy racer, techno junkies to contend with. It's not as if I live in the bloody Bronx either. I live in tranquil blue-rinse Bournemouth – and frankly, one expects better.

So, does Neighbours From Hell offer me the kind of displacement therapy I so desperately need? Well, no – it's all a bit too cute for that really. If I could spray 'penissubstitute' on

the bonnet of a white Nova or dump a tonne of manure on a driveway then my twisted revenge fantasies would just about be satisfied. Alas, *NFH* is not that sadistic.

The horror! The horror!

Exploding birthday cakes, swapping fish food for soap flakes and smearing shoe polish on bath towels is much more the style here. And if that's the kind of mischief you like to get up to then you'll get on well with this. In truth though, NFH is not a PC game; with classic influences like Little Computer People, Spy Vs Spy and The Sims, this cartoon comedy world of trick-setting

and trapping would actually be much more at home on a GBA in the hands of a ten year-old.

That said, NFH is an amusing and playful diversion from guns and aliens – for a while. Unfortunately, with only 14 'episodes', it's too shallow to offer lasting entertainment. If you want neighbour terrorising tactics that go beyond a single day, try living in my flat.



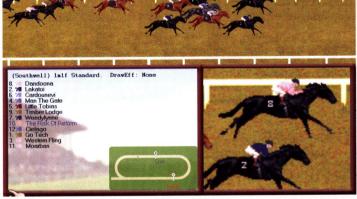
48

About as hellish as Ramsay Street

STARTERS ORDERS



■ £18.99 (from www.startersorders.com)| Pub: Strategic Designs | Dev: Strategic Designs | ETA: Out Now



Move your bloomin' arse you worthless nag.

I, PAUL Presley, being of sound mind, do hereby permit when dame fate decides to pull down the curtain on the stage show of my life, all reading this to paint the word 'SUCKER' across the ornate marble housing that will surely encase my remains. I am my own worst enemy. Every time one of these 'specialist' titles appears, I latch onto it, hoping to unearth the Next Big Thing and prove the baying cynics wrong.

Enough. This is a horse racing management sim. It's the most amateur game I've ever seen. Once the 'having a flutter' novelty wears off all that's left is the most basic of management game functions. It's broken my will. Yup, it's bad enough to turn even this optimist into a right old cynic.

Paul Presley

PCZONE VERDICT 32



The gameplay may be complex, but the graphics certainly aren't.

UNCOMMON VALOUR

■ £29.99 | Pub: Just Play | Dev: Matrix Games | ETA: Out Now

SIMULATING a campaign like the battle for the South Pacific between Japan and the US in 1942 and 1943 with any degree of realism is a big task, even for a veteran designer like Gary Grigsby (the man behind this game). But simulate he has, though with mixed results. On the one hand, we have a superb example of thorough research, with intricate orders of battle, graphical and statistical representation of the ships and planes, and a set of combat and supply mechanics that help recreate the battle.

On the other hand, what we don't seem to have here is a particularly manageable game for anyone other than very keen enthusiasts of the era. And even they'll struggle with an ill thoughtout interface that practically collapses under the weight of the information and detail it has to present to the user. An interesting, though flawed wargame for the serious, serious strategy fan.

Steve O'Hagan

Sieve O i

PCZONE VERDICT



VIETNAM MEDEVAC

■£19.99 | Pub: Just Flight | Dev: InterActive Vision ETA: Out Now

REMEMBER Search And
Rescue 3? No, of course you don't. It's a flight sim that doesn't involve shooting things. Which loses half the remaining 20 per cent of you still reading past the first sentence. Secondly it deals with the specific world of flying rescue choppers to traffic accidents. Which says goodbye to pretty much everyone else except me, a couple of you, the developers' families and the bloke that flies the Capital FM Flying Eye, dreaming of something beyond looking at tailbacks on the A40.

Vietnam Medevac is the same damn thing but in green. The traffic is replaced by 'Charlie', occasionally troubling your downwash with a bullet. The stranded climbers, divers and car crash victims are now wounded Gls needing a lift back to headquarters. Needless to say it's niche and not much fun, meaning those of you still reading probably won't like it that much anyway.

Paul Presley

PCZONE VERDICT





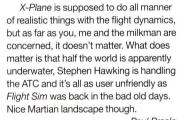
Even the co-pilot's had enough.

X-PLANE VERSION 6



■£39.99 (+ a further £26 for global scenery files) | Pub: Koch Media | Dev: Laminar Research | ETA: Out Now

MUCH LIKE testicular piercing, *X-Plane* is firmly in the 'specialist interest' market. Whereas Microsoft is content to create a good-looking, extremely detailed, highly realistic aviation simulator that is accessible to all and contains enough content to keep both flight enthusiasts and casual pilots entertained for years to come, the creator of *X-Plane* has chosen to explore the other part of town. The one called 'stupid'.



Paul Presley

PCZONE VERDICT





"We're on fire and upside down. For goodness sake stop smiling."



There's a wide choice of aircraft, if nothing else.

HUGO – SMAKKABALL

■£9.99 | PUB: ITE Media | DEV: ITE Media | ETA: Out Now





It's like one per cent of Speedball. But less fun.

HUGO THE TROLL. What an evil little shit. Apparently he's one of the most successful game characters of the last decade, spawning TV shows, toys, music, not to mention dozens of insipid kiddie fodder games. Like this one, a heinous 'sports-action' game that requires you to run around an empty room throwing a ball against a wall. It'd be a good simulation of solitary confinement, were

there not another competitor in the room.

Yes it's pitched at three year olds, but even so, it's bordering on a non-game and would patronise even a toddler. Bereft of ideas, charm and content, *Smakkaball* is one of the most pointless games ever to cross my desk. As Prezzer was prompted to remark: "This is the sort of shit we used to give away on the coverdisk." Avoid.

Anthony Holden

PCZONE VERDICT





A thing of beauty... pity it was on the wrong side.

OPERATION BARBAROSSA SPECIAL EDITION

■ £14.99 | Pub: Just Flight | Dev: Stefan Trombke ETA: Out Now

LET ME ASK you a question. Who is better looking, Brad Pitt or Mel Gibson? What, you're probably asking, does this have to do with the review? Well, like the lawyer in *The Simpsons*, I am so confident of the case that *IL-2: Forgotten Battles* presents not only for itself, but for any add-on or expansion packs that are released, I really feel I can waste the magazine's time by rating the superhunks.

But if you want details, *Barbarella*, sorry *Barbarossa*, deals with the

Germans' ill-advised push on Moscow. The campaign is played out from the Luftwaffe's point of view, with two near-identical series of missions for different types of pilots. Plus all the usual extra skins and single-mission nonsense that comes with these things. And it's almost as good, if a bit more limited, than *IL-2:FB*. 'Nuff said.

Paul Presley

PCZONE VERDICT



STARSHIPS UNLIMITED: DIVIDED GALAXIES

■ £24.99 | Pub: Just Play | Dev: Matrix Games | ETA: Out Now

REQUIRES PII 500, 64MB RAM and a 2MB graphics card DESIRES 128MB RAM and an 8MB graphics card

Steve O'Hagan manages to get lost in space

disappointment of Master Of Orion III, the ears of 4X space strategy fans (Explore, Expand, Exploit, Exterminate) will have pricked up upon hearing of this title from US strategy specialists Matrix Games, creating an army of Spock-a-like galactic ruler wannabes

But before we all rush out and proclaim this to be the new 4X messiah like a scene from Frank Herbert's *Dune*, let's take a moment to examine some of the crucial failings of this charmingly low-budget release.

First up graphics. Verdict: rubbish. But you know

what? We don't care. They'll do.
Second, and finally, the interface. Verdict: overly complicated.
Yes, it's that age-old bugbear: the horrendous, clunky, clumsy interface.
We say interface, but what we are describing is effectively a row of

pull-down menus at the top

of the screen. Very little pointing and clicking, no context sensitive cursor, and no two mouse-button system of note either.

All of which manages to ruin a game that actually has much to offer in terms of strategy and sheer "I'm seeing the galaxy for the first time" joy. Seven races, tons of random events, plenty of research options, weapon systems and ship designs to tinker with. Things run in real time, though there's a pause every time a ship, space station or construction yard needs telling what to do. This works well initially, guiding you through unfolding events, but when you've got a universe



Thankfully, you can automate the tactical combat system.

full of people asking for orders, it becomes a disorientating headache. And the less said about the baffling ship-to-ship combat system the better.

A good effort, but one that will frustrate and thwart even the hardened 4X fan.



The good is XXXXed by the horrific interface





Combat is baffling.



War can be hell, especially when it looks this bad.

CHARIOTS OF WAR

■ £29.99 | Pub: Koch Media | Dev: Slitherine Strategies | ETA: Out Now

CHARIOTS Of War has one huge advantage over its predecessor Legion, it doesn't feature those darlings of the RTS world, the bloody Romans. Instead the civilisations of choice for this turn-based strategy title are the fledgling kingdoms of man that inhabited the 'Fertile Crescent' of 4,000-year-old Mesopotamia.

CoW has numerous little improvements over Legion such as the addition of trading, 64 nations and random events, which definitely add more depth to the gameplay.

Unfortunately, as the engine is exactly the same, it means you're still being faced with outdated and uninspiring graphics.

Aside from juggled formations and attack commands, you have no control over your troops once a battle has begun, reducing combat to a slightly more sophisticated game of conkers. The good intentions are there, but the graphics and innovation have died on the battlefield.

Rhianna Pratchett

PCZONE VERDICT



RED SHARK

■ £14.99 | Pub: Oxygen Interactive | Dev: G5 Software | ETA: Out Now

RED SHARK'S plot doesn't do much for this game as it seems to have been translated by a monolingual Russian after two bottles of Vodka. You pilot an attack helicopter sent back in time to kill Nazis, described in-game as a 'great influence device' in 'the historical point correction in the interest of Russia'. From what we can work out, this means you're changing the course of modern history, but basically you're just shooting stuff.

As a mindless actioner Red Shark isn't too bad: frenetically locking onto tiny tanks and houses and blasting them with missiles is fun after all. The main problem is with repetition: missions and environments may differ but your tactics and weapons never do. Graphically, despite a few pretty explosions, visuals are poor, with Russian



Thrilling, later levels feature the desert.

villages looking suspiciously like Kinder egg toys close-up.

One saving grace is that lower-spec machines will run it comfortably, but *Red Shark* is interesting for hours not days.

Will Porter

PCZONE VERDICT

46



Fighting with a chopper from the year 2040 in 1942 gives you a slight advantage.

COLD ZERO

■ £29.99 | Pub: KOCH Media | Dev: Drago Entertainment | ETA: September 5

REQUIRES PIII 600, 128MB RAM and a 16MB 3D card

DESIRES PIII 1GHz and a 32MB 3D card

This dose of tactical action still leaves Steve O'Hagan feeling cold

COLD ZERO is an RTS, in that it is a game reliant on strategy that takes place in real time. But you only get to control one guy, John McAffrey, a mercenary available to hire for good causes. You have to guide John through 16 missions taking in rainy docklands, steamy jungles and heavilyguarded industrial facilities. A simple point-and-click interface moves Johnny around the screen, and allows him to open doors, climb obstacles, and hide in suitable nooks and crannies.

There's an emphasis on stealth, an even heavier emphasis on combat, with a rudimentary plot tying the missions together. Levels are typically staffed with enough gun-toting goons to form a US Infantry Division. Whether you sneak around cutting throats or wade in with a heavy machine

gun is down to you, though the stealth system is not sufficiently honed, resulting in you getting spotted for what would appear to be no good reason.

There's a certain satisfaction in blasting bad guys with a gaggle of automatic weapons. but the third-person isometric viewpoints and real-time system don't allow for a whole lot of precision in the fighting. Can I see through that window? Better just fire and find out.

Like this kind of thing or not. it feels like the designers took an RPG like Fallout or Diablo, ripped out the combat system. and this is what's left. Not really enough to justify a standalone game, we reckon.





The engine is rudimentary, at best.



John will gain skills with experience.



A meter shows how much noise you are making

6000

You've got to recreate the animals' natural habitats.

WILDLIFE PARK

■ £29.99 | Pub: KOCH Media | Dev: Novatrix | ETA: September 12 REQUIRES PIII 500, 128MB RAM and a 4MB 3D card DESIRES PIII 1Ghz, 256MB RAM and a 16MB 3D card

PC ZONE's resident animal lover Steve O'Hagan

goes bestial in this zoo-based tycoon game

EVER SINCE

witnessing monkeys hurling faeces at each other as a young boy, I have been fascinated by zoos and wildlife parks. But not,

it would seem, having played this effort from Novatrix, fascinated enough to warrant sitting down for eight hours at a time trying to recreate the experience on my PC.

Actually, that's harsh. Had this not been so acutely similar to pretty much every other Theme Park management sim out there, it would have been more appealing. Imagine the animals in their enclosures are the equivalent of the rides in Theme Park, and everything falls into place. Lower prices encourage visitors, guards keep order, bins prevent rubbish, burger joints earn cash, nicely planned paths and scenic features keep people happy. Any Theme Park fan will take under two minutes to adapt to the new surroundings.

As far as the animals go,

card, and there is enjoyment to be had in training penguins to jump through hoops, watching your vet getting mauled by a Siberian tiger, and cleaning up mounds of elephant dung. The campaign tries to keep things interesting with plenty of challenges and scenarios to deal with, and a free play mode is there for those who just want to build and build.

It's really not a bad game, but it's just so painfully similar to those that have come before. Probably perfect for your kid brother or sister who loves animals, or for that bloke who got caught wanking a dolphin in the North Sea. But not for the rest of us.





herein lies the game's trump



REPLAY

The place to go when you've got no dough

AGE OF EMPIRES

£4.99 | Pub: Xplosiv | ETA: Out Now

A FIVER isn't much to pay for a piece of strategy gaming history. These days the Age Of series may be all about raining fireballs and recreating the Clash of the Titans, but this was where it all began; with a few loincloth-clad peasants and a handful of berry bushes.

Age Of Empires takes the Civilization approach of recognising the gameplay potential surrounding human evolution and takes you into a real-time environment as you struggle to balance your civilisation's economic and military needs.

The game revolves around real historical campaigns and the exploits of 12 nationalities over a period of 10,000 years. But the beauty of Age Of Empires is everything is so seamlessly put together that going from a slinger to a phalanx in less than 20 minutes seems natural. The

graphics may look a bit shabby now, but meticulous attention to detail, ranging from the wood chopping animations to the sad trumpeting of a flailing elephant that's just been made into a giant Stone Age pin cushion, ensure it still has character.

OK, so if you're any kind of selfrespecting strategy fan you'll probably have played Age Of Empires six years ago. But maybe, just maybe, you didn't catch on to how great it was until Age Of Kings. Possibly the disc got scratched and used as a coaster or you haven't played an RTS game in your life and wonder what the fuss is about? Whether you live or relive the experience, it can be yours for 500 shiny pennies. A bargain if ever I saw one.

Rhianna Pratchett **PCZONE VERDICT**





Some of the larger battles can be truly titanic affairs.



When you're a vampire, everyone can hear you scream.

D OMEN 2

■ £4.99 | Pub: Sold Out | ETA: Out Now

IF YOU'RE into vicious hack 'n' slash action/adventures then there's every chance Blood Omen 2 will appeal to your twisted sense of fun. It's by no means a classic but it does have a distinctly blood-curdling atmosphere, a good plot and some slick gameplay. The whole vampire thing is pulled

off with great aplomb and as you creep further into the game as Kain, the pointytoothed anti-hero of

> this gruesome tale, a whole host of powers become yours. You can turn into mist to

sneak up on your dinner, you can fly, and best of all you can go into rage mode, which means you can pin your enemies up against a wall and rip out their throats.

The control interface is an absolute doddle too, and the lock-on fighting system means you'll be hanging off human jugulars before you can say "Nosferatu". But be warned, if you're looking for depth and longevity you won't find it here. Blood Omen 2 is extremely linear, with a penchant for simplistic lever puzzles, and ultimately it's fairly repetitive.

Overall, a budget price of five pounds is about right. Blood Omen 2 is a wellpresented and well-crafted game, but it's more suited to consoles and far too short. Keith Pullin

PCZONE VERDICT



■ £4.99 | Pub: Xplosiv | ETA: Out Now

JOHN R Blade, SiN's ass-kicking policeman, was the Nukem that time forgot, perhaps slightly unfairly. A certain FPS whose imminent sequel we're quite excited about, completely eclipsed it and SiN was consigned to history. The game was quite innovative, had good level design and a baddie with large breasts: it just wasn't as good as Half-Life.

Sadly, there is still no pressing reason to buy it, aside from an alluring price-tag. There are 35 levels to blast through, equating to 14.2p per level, but a lot of water has passed under the bridge since the Quake II engine reigned supreme. Almost an ocean's worth in fact.

Stuff like enemies on ropes crashing through skylights, machine-gunning from helicopters and attempts at non-linearity are not the selling-points they were in the days of SiN. The game's originality has been crushed under the FPS avalanche of the past five years and there isn't much left to excite even casual gamers.

Will Porter

PCZONE VERDICT







A relatively quiet moment for Expendable.

EXPENDABLE

■£4.99 | Pub: Xplosiv | ETA: Out Now

WHEN THIS decidedly average no-brain shoot 'em up first appeared, my preview was quoted horribly out of context on the box, the posters, across the floor of that year's E3 exhibition and in pubs, bars and church meetings up and down this fair and of ours. "Best game ever made" or some such nonsense. If you read the rest of the preview, you'd have known this wasn't quite what I was getting at, but I suppose it was my own fault for not realising that when isolated, it just read as hough I was some kind of fawning sycophant who was on Rage's payroll.

The truth about Expendable is that it's he perfect encapsulation of gaming in the ore-D3D late '90s era. Everything was Och, look at the pretty coloured lights

and the lens flares, aren't our graphical routines better than everyone else's? Now shut up and shoot things over and over again until your eyes bleed." Expendable was the ultimate expression of the developer's tortured desire to get a game into the Tate Modern.

Forget meaningful content, it's just meaningless shooting across one garishly lit background after another. No more advanced than Space Invaders. And of course the one hook it had - the graphics - now look horribly dated since technology has since moved on at lightning speed. Not worth bothering with at any price.

Paul Preslev

PCZONE VERDICT



FRONTLINE ATTACK: **WAR OVER EUROPE**

■ £4.99 | Pub: Sold Out | ETA: Out Now



Don't mess with the Russians.

STUPENDOUSLY beautiful day and night missions: slick presentation: wonderfully atmospheric music and effects, and the opportunity to join the German, Russian or Allied forces. What more could you want from a World War II RTS? A decent control interface, intelligent Al and sensible path-finding would help.

Yes, Frontline Attack: War Over Europe is the kind of game that promises much at

Not that we're picky or anything.



A bridge too far?

around like hallucinating ants and rarely seem to know where they're going or where they've been. Actually making a soldier do what you want requires embarrassing levels of coaxing. And if you thought the intelligence of these vacant fighting machines might improve over time - you're wrong; they stay this stupid until they eventually step on a mine and incinerate themselves.

The game's few redeeming features like the historically accurate multiple objective missions, level editor and numerous skirmish maps might just convince the most forgiving

wargamer that this could be time well spent. But sadly, for the rest of us, there's little to justify a purchase here even if it is only a fiver. Keith Pullin

PCZONE VERDICT



ALPHA CENTAURI

£4.99 | Pub: Sold Out | ETA: Out Now



he graphics are basic, but the gameplay is deep and compelling.

CIVILISATION fans will emember that in Civ I and II the game ended with a manned spaceship heading or the star named Alpha Centauri. This ame is about what happens when it ands. In other words, you have a planet to explore and amazing new technologies to iscover. Created by Sid Meier, the brain behind the original Civ, AC offers the same p-all-night gameplay, a zoomable sometric map view and seven different actions with different ideologies and Als.

With 75 new technologies, 60 base pgrades, customisable units built around 32,000 ptions and a muchmproved interface, AC is guaranteed to keep strategy

gamers happy for days if not weeks. It's also a game you'll keep coming back to.

An excellent innovation is that the game works out the borders between factions and shows them on the map. Trespass over one and you'll find yourself on the receiving end of a diplomatic note. Instead of settlers and engineers you get terraformers and pods, the former to add farms, roads and terrain improvements. the latter to create new bases. It's a budget game that still deserves a high score, although the ugly graphics and the arrivals of the excellent Civ III and

Empire Earth mean its appeal isn't as high as it once was. Andrew Wright

PCZONE VERDICT



LEFTOVERS

PLEASE SIR, CAN I HAVE SOME MORE SIR?

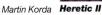
A couple of old favourites in the leftovers section this month. Need For Speed III: Hot Pursuit (£4.99, published by Sold Out, Out Now) came as a welcome return to form for the series after its disastrously poor predecessor (answers on a postcard if you can guess its name). The beauty of three is that it's not just a straight forward racer, instead offering you a host of options including split-screen races against your mates and the chance to either run away from chasing cops, or reverse the roles and do the chasing in your very own law-mobile.

There's also a fair variety of courses on offer, ranging from a desolate desert race to a more feature-filled suburban one, and your opponents show a fair level of AI, which although hardly staggering, will prove enough of a challenge to keep you occupied for a fair while.

It's looking dated now and there are a host of driving games that have superseded it over the last couple of years, but at this price, you'd do far worse than shelling out and having a spin. 69 per cent.

And while I'm being vaguely positive about golden oldies that are available for a fiver, how about Heretic II (£4.99, Xplosiv, Out Now), an all-out action third-person hack 'n' slash with a (believe it or not) half decent plot and a modicum of variation. Well, for an older shooter anyway.

Again it looks more dated than an unmarried 50-year-old model, there are some issues with the controls, and little to no replay value, but if you're one for nostalgia and forgiving of a few wrinkles, then it's still a fair bit of fun, even now, so it warrants a vaguely respectable 69 per cent.





Need For Speed III: Hot Pursuit



SCIENCE FICTION ACTION,
SLEEPLESS NIGHTS
AND ENDLESS, EVER-GROWING WARS,
ALL IN YOUR BROWSER.

PLANETARION

PLANETARION 10 BE THERE. AUGUST 2003

WWW.PLANETARION.COM

Planetarion is a science fiction war game where thousands of players and hundreds of galaxies fight for the domination of the universe or merely surviving played through an html interface - your web browser - Planetarion does not require any download or installation of any kind of software.

BULLETS RICOCHETED OFF THE WALL SPINNING SPLINTERED SHARDS OF MASONRY ACROSS THE SCREEN. ANOTHER SHORT BURST OF SMALL ARMS FIRE BETRAYED THE ENEMIES POSITION AND A WELL PLACED GRENADE BOUNCED OFF THE WAREHOUSE DOORS, BLEW THE WINDOWS, ECHOED AND MOMENTARILY EXAGGERATED THE SHADOWS FORCING HER ENEMY FROM THE COVER OF THE DOORWAY.

INSTINCT ENGAGED, SHE DROPPED THROUGH THE SMOKE AND KICKED OUT, BRINGING HER WEAPON LEVEL; DEPRESSED THE FIRE KEY AND LET FLY.

SHE FELT THE LOW PING BULLET TIME RUSH.

AND RELISHED WATCHING HER ENEMY DROP HARD. FAMILIAR, THE IMPACT; ICE COLD AGAINST METAL.

THE FLOOR DANCED WITH SPENT SHELL CASINGS.

PRESSING THE GUN AGAINST HIS BLOODIED HEAD, SHE WONDERED WHERE HE'D RESPAWN. SHE SMILED INSIDE, IT OVERTOOK HER. SHE SHUDDERED IN HER CHAIR AND TYPED...

your ass is mine

OVER 700 OF THE FASTEST DEDICATED GAME SERVERS
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WARNING: www.jolt.co.uk runs FREE public servers. Jolt do not accept responsibility that you may be owned mercilessly. JOLT ADSL. low latency connections an advantage.



FEEDBACK

Martin Korda rips open the mailbag and deals with your latest batch of letters regarding some of the newest games to hit the shelves...

IT'S YOUR SHOUT

Feedback is here to offer you a platform to have your say about games we've reviewed over the past three issues. Whether you totally agree, or utterly disagree with us, we want to hear from you. And all you have to do to get your views in print is send an email to letters@pczone.co.uk with 'Feedback' in the subject line. Please try and keep your views to ess than 100 words. Anything longer will either not be considered, or may have to be edited for size.

ENTER THE MATRIX

REVIEWED ISSUE: 130 SCORE: 72%

What we thought

"If Enter The Matrix was an album, it would probably be Now 54! – granted, it has some standout moments, but also a lot of filler."

What you said

Ifeel that Shiny could have produced something truly spectacular with this movie license. However you don't always get what you wish for.

Several things let this game down. Firstly, the graphics are poor, with numerous graphical gitches such as square wheels and clipping problems. Sound is also problematic, turning on and off during crucial cut scenes. And while the driving/piloting sections offer a change, they're pretty throwaway.

However, the control system works fairly well. And there's loads of fun to be had with the slo-mo kung fu sections. The main character models look nice too.

Ultimately, it's flawed but worth the asking price for the extra *Matrix* FMV footage (even if it does feel like a big ad for the next two films) and the cinematic kung fu gameplay. Like you, I'd score this game 72 per cent.

Gary Bradley

I wasn't expecting much from Enter The Matrix and have to agree that it's a pretty average title with some minor grievances. One of these is the unlocking of gameplay tips, which turn out to be some of the most pointlessly unhelpful tips this side of a badly translated Japanese instruction manual. Here's an example. "To accelerate press 'Accelerate' and to brake press 'Brake'". Like, wow. That was so helpful. I don't know where I'd be without the tips.

Tony Goff

Comment

Enter The Matrix is an unspectacular game saved by some half-decent FMV footage which ties in with the films. Now, just imagine if they hadn't bothered with the video footage? It doesn't bare thinking about.

THE SIMS: SUPERSTAR

REVIEWED ISSUE: 130 SCORE: 59%

What we thought

"If you live in a happy, fluffy land of Barbie dolls and childhood dreams, then Superstar will fit very nicely into your perception of fame."



Many of you have found Enter The Matrix disappointing.

What you said

When will EA stop pumping out Sims add-ons? The first game was crap yet people still seem to buy it. Then came your Superstar review, in which you awarded it 59 per cent. Have you gone soft? It doesn't deserve more than 40 per cent. What does this new add on offer I ask you? Some new places where you can sing? This is rubbish and I believe EA is now starting to take the mickey. So please PC ZONE, do us a favour. When the next Sims add-on appears, don't review it.

Tony

I think all this hatred towards The Sims and its add on packs is getting a bit out of hand. Remember, they're aimed at families who aren't into hardcore gaming and it sells millions. My two daughters and I have enjoyed The Sims and its add-on packs for several years now. It seems that so-called hardcore gamers have become resentful of its success. If you don't like the games, don't buy

of us who do.
I've found the
latest add-on,
Superstar, to be
one of the weaker add ons, but
while 59 per cent was a little
harsh (65 per cent would be
fairer I think), the review was
pretty accurate. Thanks PC
ZONE for not jumping on the

'We hate The Sims' bandwagon.

Carl Smith

Comment

them, just stop

having a go at those

There's certainly a large group out there who hate *The Sims* with a passion. There's also an even bigger group who love the series. All we can do is judge each game and expansion as it appears.



Has The Sims bashing gone too far?

After all, that's what we're here for.

DAY OF DEFEAT

REVIEWED ISSUE: 130 SCORE: 84%

What we thought

"One of the most atmospheric, tense and enjoyable shooters I've ever played. However,

considering it's on the Net for free, this retail version is only worth buying if you don't want to mess around with downloads or don't own Half-Life."

What you said

Why would anyone want to buy this? Firstly, you can buy Half-Life (another overrated game) for half the price and play this for free, but that isn't all that prevents me from recommending this game. The dated graphics I can live with. The game creates the right atmosphere. So what is my problem, you ask? Well, a game of DoD goes like this.

Respawn. Get shot. Wait to respawn. Get shot. Wait. Respawn. Ad nauseam. Who in their right mind would want to play a game this difficult? 84 per cent? It isn't even April.

Laceyware

Thank you for running *DoD* on your cover disks. I am now completely hooked on the game and my wife keeps shouting at me to stop and do something useful round the house. But it's worth the torment just to be able to have one more go on this superb game.

Darren

Comment

DoD is one of the best online shooters we've seen. Whether you buy the retail version or play the downloadable version from our coverdisk in issue 130, we believe you'll find it to be a truly thrilling experience once you get the hang of it.

"A game of *DoD* goes like this. Respawn. Get shot. Wait to respawn. Get shot. Wait. Respawn. Ad nauseam"

LACEYWARE ON DAY OF DEFEAT

REALITY CHECK: OVAL RACING

Steve Hill once more risks life and limb to bring you the truth

HELLO, ME again. Not content with last month's live RPG humiliation, the evercharitable ZONE bods appear intent on sending me round the bend. In this case, lots of bends, one after the other. There are a few straights in between, but essentially it's one long left turn. Welcome to the world of Indy Car Racing, in many ways Formula One's redheaded stepchild. It may not have the glamour of a day out in Monaco, and is admittedly watched in the main by straw-chewing rednecks in the southern United

States, but it is nevertheless a viable sport, and indeed one that goes on right here in the UK. At Rockingham Motor Speedway, to be precise, a purpose-built track on the periphery of Kettering.

Thus far in my life I've been to Kettering twice, each time to watch my team, Chester City, play at Kettering Town's Rockingham Road. There's more than three points at stake today though, and a real chance of coming home in an oak cloak. An evening in the bar of the Corby Hilton hasn't helped, and it is

with a nervy hangover that I approach the day's proceedings. It's fair to say that there is more than a mild sense of trepidation. As such, it's probably even more pressing that I pay attention during the briefing, but despite a concerted effort to do so, as soon as the bloke opens his mouth I stop listening, immediately transported back to every lecture I ever sat through.

BACK AT THE GRID

What's the worst that could happen? Well, I suppose I could slew into a concrete wall at



It took two giant shoe horns to achieve this.

WHAT'S A REALITY CHECK?

Reality Check is a monthly feature comparing PC Games to their real-life equivalents. Or at least, as close as we can get without risking serious bodily harm.

OVAL-Wortaki
REAL
vs



"People have died doing this, but by this stage I have settled into a numb acceptance of my fate"

120mph - something that happens frequently in the games - and die a violent and fiery death. This and other scenarios are uppermost in my mind as I sit on the grid, gently revving my Indy Car while mentally reciting the positions of the clutch, brake and accelerator. Snapped from my morbid reverie by a man frantically waving me forwards, we're underway, and I slap it into first, tentatively making my way up the pit lane and onto the track, part of a small group behind a pace car.

As usual, it's a piece of piss, and I gradually clunk through the gears into fourth and begin to get a measure of the car's

98 PCZONE



power. They may look like overgrown Scalextric cars, but they're zippy little bastards, and hammering the accelerator down a straight is more than enough to scare yourself.

Confidence is key though, and snippets of the briefing come filtering back, such as easing off the gas on the approach to each bend. It's valuable advice, and you can soon settle into a rhythm, with recourse to braking only when right up someone's arse. So far so good then, and it's an exhilarating yet mainly controlled experience. After a few laps we are waved back into the pits, which presents its own

problems when my lack of experience at simultaneously using a clutch and a brake becomes all too evident, screeching to a halt inches behind the car in front. Drivers are then separated into groups based on ability, and despite my condition, I am placed in the middle group of three.

INSECTICIDE

Taking this as a cue to drive even faster, I begin to push it to the limit, accelerating out of bends with aplomb and generally making like a boy racer (while whooping like a girl). The only minor blip occurs when a non-specific insect

golf-ball sized splat over my left eye. Casually attempting to wipe off the layer of corpse with my glove, I momentarily take one hand off the wheel. As soon as my arm leaves the sanctity of the cockpit, it is flung backwards, flailing spastically in the wind as I grapple one-handed with the wheel, inches away from the high-speed concrete wall. Forgoing the insect eye patch, I wrestle my flapping limb back into the car and assume a modicum of control, both of car and bowels.

WINDOW LICKER

Back on dry land, the terror isn't over yet, as a quick spin in a NASCAR awaits. Strapped into the passenger seat, the professional driver is taking no prisoners and it's akin to being in an aeroplane that doesn't take off. A thundering beast of a vehicle, any attempt at conversation is rendered useless and it's simply a case of holding on and waiting until it's over. People have died doing this, but by this stage I have settled into a numb acceptance of my fate and it's little more than a glorified in-car view in a NASCAR game, albeit with added gut-churning. After a couple of hair-raising laps, I clamber out of the window and gratefully head for the refreshments.

I live to drive another day then, having survived both disciplines intact (and even the Rockingham lunch). But can we please do something safer next month?



Bladder control failure in 3... 2... 1...

HOW REAL IS... INDYCAR SERIES?

CODEMASTERS COME GOOD



At 230mph accidents can happen.

Judging by the day's experience, *IndyCar Series* is pretty damn real, offering a terrifying sense of speed that is all the more convincing having actually done it. Tearing down the straights and easing off into the bends is the way to go, as in the real thing, and a great deal of effort seems to have been made in replicating the feel of the car. Exploding insects haven't been recreated though, which is probably for the best.



HOW REAL IS... NASCAR RACING 2003?

CLETUS, PASS ME MAH HELMET



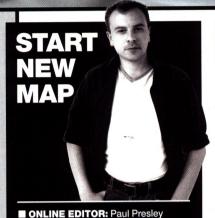
NASCAR Racing 2003 isn't nearly scary enough.

A throaty roar, a thud of acceleration, and a cockpit that seems to have been designed to house Hannibal Lecter. These are some of the key attributes of NASCAR racing and they are all present and correct in the game. Criticised for being little more than going round and round like a one-armed swimmer, the actual experience brings home what a hair-raising activity it is. However, the game fails to convey a true sense of fear.



YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO THE WIRED WORLD OF ONLINE GAMING

ONLINE ZONE



Microsoft Start Norsing Around

BEARDS TO BE PROUD OF WITH THE VIKING-THEMED MYTHICA

Starting a new section in the world's greatest gaming mag is always a daunting task. Only the finest of minds, the sharpest of intellects and the most creative of artisans can hope to come up with something original that reshapes the way we look at magazines, if

not publishing in its entirety.

But while we wait for that to happen, welcome to the new Online Zone – a one-stop shop for all your online and multiplayer needs. With everyone from Microsoft to that bloke down the pub with a second-hand C64 busy developing a MMOG (massively multiplayer online game), what better time to dedicate an entire section to this fastest growing area of gaming?

And what better way to start than with the most eagerly awaited MMOG ever? Shortly before this issue was due at the local Happy Snaps for printing, Sony and LucasArts shocked us all by releasing Star Wars Galaxies – some five months ahead of schedule.

Insanity? Genius? We put the presses on hold as our American team laboured to bring you the first review of the biggest MMOG since the genre began.

Meanwhile, the rest of the section is practically bursting at the gills with online gaming greatness. Veteran goblin botherer Chris Anderson passes judgement on Rubies Of Eventide, the opening instalment of Codemasters' Dragon Empires diary begins, our Readers' Challenge launches in full, and we round everything off with Steve Hill's misadventures in EverQuest. Let me know what you think of the new OZ by emailing me at online.zone@pczone.co.uk. But be kind, I'm still just a newbie.



Where's the god of headache remedies when you need him?

TRYING TO FIND an MMOG with an original setting is often like trying to find a brain cell in a supermodel – next to impossible. If you're not smacking giant goblins on the nonce with algebraencumbered broadswords in medieval lands, then you're more than likely going to be moping forlornly in a

going to be moping forlornly in a dystopic futureworld, dressed in your Goth-finest while twatting numerous giant cyber-rats with an algebra-encumbered laser pistol (You're running this section why again? – Ed.)

But not for Microsoft.

Mythica, unveiled publicly for the first time at this year's E3, eschews the traditional clichés and instead sets its sights on the 'real' world of Norse mythology. The first twist is that you start the game having been killed in battle (as befits all good

been killed in battle (as befits all good Vikings) only to find your immortal spirit recruited to fight for the god of your choice.

With the adherence to actual mythology (as opposed to the made-up Hobbits of Tolkein et al) comes a sense of real weight.

THE ONLINE MASSIVES

HIGHLIGHTING SOME OF THE OTHER MMOGS MAKING IN-ROADS FOR OUR CREDIT CARD NUMBERS



HORIZONS: EMPIRE OF ISTARIA

(ARTIFACT ENTERTAINMENT/ATARI) Playable dragons, intricate combat manoeuvres and a colonising 'new frontier' dynamic set the fantasy-themed *Horizon* apart. Teamwork is encouraged and visual quality is particularly high, with an emphasis on cinematic effects during combat and spell-casting. ETA: November 2003.



MIDDLE EARTH ONLINE

(TURBINE GAMES/VIVENDI)
Drawing on the rich heritage
of Tolkien's epic world, MEO
lets you experience the saga
of the One Ring from the
perspective of the everyday
inhabitants of Middle Earth.
Quests promise to focus on
the moral choices between
good and evil, with choices
affecting the ethical tapestry
of the world around you.
ETA: Late 2004.



THE SAGA OF RYZOM

(NEVRAX/WANADOO)
Stunning landscapes and scenery effects are the order of the day here. Apparently inspired by the life and work of, er, David Attenborough, the French developers behind this mix of alien and organic topography are providing guilds with the tools to build their own homeworlds, ensuring Atys will constantly surprise online explorers. ETA: September 2003.



LOST DUNGEONS OF NORRATH

(SONY ONLINE/UBI SOFT) While *EQII* continues to gallop towards its winter release, Sony is pilling expansion packs onto the original's 500,000 regular inhabitants. *LDON* introduces adaptive dungeon technology, tailoring each murky catacomb to the exact strengths of your party, as well as adding new interfaces and better reward systems.

ETA: Autumn 2003.



STAR WARS GALAXIES Taking the Force online



READERS' CHALLENGE Prove your worth and win big



GETTING STARTED IN... Improve your EVE Online skills



NEVERQUEST Steve Hill returns to Norrath



Better than the Isle Of Wight ferry.

Knowing that you're battling in the name of Thor or Odin should give your adventures that extra edge of drama, or should at the very least make the costumes worn at the 'real-world' convention meet-ups just a touch more well researched. Classes vary from the Bezerkers of the venerable Thunder God, to the Trickster legions of Loki, with Huntresses, Pyromancers and Demonologists among the others in the mix.

The core of the game is split across both public and private 'realms', the public areas providing basic quests and all the usual social interaction, the private realm modules allow you to group up with several fellow immortals and take on specific quests without the risk of boss monsters who have been spawn-camped by lazy good-fornothings with more subscription money than ethical sense.

WE BE HEROES

Modules are further sub-divided into 'linear' and 'playscape' quests. The former are adventures with goals and set paths, such as defending a mountain pass from invading fire giants. Playscape adventures are more open-ended, presenting a situation (such as choosing sides during the siege of Leithi) and letting the players do with it what they will.

This dramatic nature of the gameplay and background settings is also apparent in the way characters progress. Rewards come through completing heroic deeds, rather than by sitting for hours in front of a tree with the 'woodcutting' key taped down. As your reputation with the mortals



A nice pair of toasted buns (sorry).



You'd think with all that fire she wouldn't be looking so, uh, obviously cold.

increases, so special skills and other bonuses are unlocked, swelling your power base like an Italian tenor's waistline after an 'All You Can Eat' buffet.

Other socially beneficial factors include group magic rites and combination skills, which means clans and guilds have more of a purpose than to simply make outsiders feel unwelcome. The landscape is also dynamic in nature, with hidden triggers reacting to player's current actions or standings, bestowing benefits or penalties, from combat bonuses to increasing the numbers of enemies to face.

Presently Mythica is due for a 2004 release. We'll bring you an in-depth preview real soon.



"Clans and quilds have more of a purpose than to simply make outsiders feel unwelcome"

WEBGAME OF THE MONT

WHY PAY TO PLAY 🥳 WHEN THE INTERWEB PROVIDES FUN FOR FREE?



The text-heavy Holy Empire Of Prezionia. Power is all.

NATIONSTATES

(www.nationstates.net)

While Republic: The Revolution (see page 78) is currently the first-stop sim of choice for would-be despots, tyrants and oppressive martinets, those without the patience to spend days manipulating their route to the top can now cut out the middleman thanks to a bored author.

NationStates starts you out as the ruler of a tin-pot nation in the Pacific, then sits back as you proceed to either run your country into the ground or be hailed as the next Castro, ruling in perpetuity.

Each day you're faced with mounting national issues, legislations and/or crises, from a bill to make public nudity compulsory, to the curtailing of basic public freedoms such as speech or movement. Lobby to join the UN and you can affect things on a global scale.

It sounds like the kind of game that could rival Civilization, but in truth it's just a series of polls and stats with social interaction among neighbouring states. That doesn't make it any less fun, especially if you band together with a bunch of likeminded comrades and break away from the Pacific Rim to form your own regional network.

NationStates was devised by Max Barry as a way to help promote his social satire novel, Jennifer Government, but as with all 'Internet snowballs', as soon as word got round the game spiralled out of control - now there are more than 88,000 nations vying for power. If someone wants to set up a PC ZONE region then be sure to let us know. Until then, "Hail, Hail Prezlonia, land of the braaaave and freeeeeeeee..."



The landscapes are almost finished.

DEVELOPER DIARY

DRAGON EMPIRES

PETER TYSON, Codemasters

By the time you read this the Dragon Empires beta test will be nearly underway and the first few testers will be ready to explore and break our world. My name is Peter Tyson, otherwise known as Calistas on our game forums and it's my job to tell people about how great Dragon Empires is going to be.

In case you haven't already heard of us, Dragon Empires is a massively multiplayer online roleplaying game set in a world where five mighty dragons watch the citizens (that's you lot) fight for control of 50 cities scattered throughout the world. Control of these cities gives you and your friends power and influence and will make you rich. You can then enjoy kicking back, having grapes peeled for you by slaves and eating half a roast sheep with just a big knife.

However, you won't quite be able to do this until spring 2004 when we release the game. Until then extensive testing will ensure DE comes out as ready and bug-free as possible. You can sign up to be a beta tester on our website (www.dragonempires.com).

Meanwhile, we just recently completed a motion capture shoot, which was a lot of fun for our animation team. They got to direct some top martial artists and weapons specialists, telling them the kind of moves they wanted and recording the results. Our early look at the data suggests that combat

"The first beta testers are getting ready to explore and break our world"

is going to look great, with lots of exciting animation keeping things lively.

The rest of the team is equally busy. Programmers are busy programming (who knows what arcane magic they're getting up to...), world builders are adding the final touches to the landscape and are moving on to fleshing out some of the cities they have started to place, and the rest of the artists are working on set after set of weapons, armour and creatures.

In next month's diary I'll be able to tell you all about the beta test and the fun of showing our baby to the rest of the world. Till then!



ARNIE JOINS THE FRAY AS TERMINATOR 3 BATTLES ONLINE

IT SEEMS ODD that no one has yet turned out a Terminator mod for any of the vast numbers of online shooters out there. However, just like the T-900 model or Arnie's acting career, such a move would now be obsolete, thanks to Atari's decision to make the upcoming PC version of T3: War Of The Machines an online shooter.

Playing as either human or SkyNet forces on ten 32-player servers, you can take part in standard Deathmatch or CTF fare, or the more interesting sounding Mission Mode, requiring specific objectives to be fulfilled a la Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory.

Human players can utilise up to four different types of armed vehicles, while SkyNet players actually become the Hunter and Flyer Killers, which sounds like a cool notion on paper. but amounts to much the same thing in practice.

Naturally, the overwhelming superiority of the machines is being toned down in order to provide a more balanced game. The human players get to rely on good old stealth abilities, while the Terminator classes get infrared vision to sniff them out. No word on whether we get to play as a shapeshifting T-1000 but given the inherent

limitations that would have to be imposed upon using such a unit, it hardly seems likely.

Arnie himself (or his digitised voice and likeness at any rate) is slated to pop up within the game when T3: WOTM appears this winter. By which time the critical dust from the new film should have settled and we'll be able to see if the Terminator bandwagon still holds the same pull.

Publisher: Atari

■ Developer: Clever's Games

■ FTA: Winter 2003

■ Website: www.atari.com

MILLION DOL MODS

NVIDIA ANNOUNCES MILLION DOLLAR UT2003 MOD-MAKING CONTEST

FAME, FORTUNE, glamour, glitz, fast cars and faster women. Yes, all the trappings that come from being a successful game designer could well be yours thanks to Nvidia, Epic Games and Atari's Make Something Unreal contest, Designed to find the next generation of talented mod developers, level designers, vehicle and weapon creators and budding movie directors, the contest is



All mod types are eligible.

offering more than US\$1,000,000 worth of prizes along with official Unreal Engine licenses.

With 13 categories including Best FPS Mod. Best Non-FPS Mod. Best Level and even Best Use of Karma Physics, creative gamers can let their imaginations run riot.

The contest is split across three phases, with the first due to be judged on July 15. Don't panic



A million dollars in total, that is.

though, the later phases are still open, with the grand final being announced next March. Along with cash prizes for winners, a special educational entry is open to school teams, all vying to win a number of computers for their particular school.

All the details can be grabbed at the official UT2003 website (www.unrealtournament2003.com). Better get those thinking caps on.

WELCOME TO MY WORLD...

SCOTT COWIE Senior Designer, Dragon Empires

"OUR LANDSCAPE pisses on anything else seen in a MMOG out there at the moment." To say Scott Cowie is proud of the world he's creating for Dragon Empires is an understatement. As Codemasters prepares to take its first steps into the territory of Massively Multiplayer, the game's senior designer is damn sure of how he wants everything to look for the first inhabitants of Fortitude. "A few trees don't make a forest in my view," he says. "Having so many trees around you that it blocks the sunlight – that does! We get to see quite a few MMOGs here so we can see what we'll be up against. Sometimes you don't think they're that bad, but sometimes it's literally laughable."

Among Cowie's landscaping no-no's are flat terrains. There's nothing worse, according to Scott, than wandering into large empty rectangles with a few blades of grass blowing forlornly in the wind. "Is that what people want to play? I hope not! With DE you'll get huge mountains that go up through the clouds and lakes looking so good that you'll actually sit around and wait for the sunrise and sunset just to see the reflections shimmer in the water."

But Cowie's proudest accomplishments are the acres of lush vegetation covering Fortitude and its natural looking landscapes, partly hand designed, partly left to an automated engine designed to grow hills, valleys and mountains organically. "You have to try and dispel the player's notion that someone else created all the surroundings," he explains. "Thankfully, our landscape engine has made a lot of its own decisions about how it should look – so nothing seems overly contrived or unnatural. Even a cynical sod like me can find himself staring at the screen for ages, just watching the clouds roll past while sitting on top of a mountain."

Another key feature of the landscape is the everchanging climate. Nine varying zones across the world all have their own textures, vegetation types and weather variables – and all have to be able to interact with each other. "Let's just say it took a while before we got it to work," smiles Cowie. "All the information has to be combined into a single file, and because all sorts of natural restrictions come into play, getting the initial design correct was a right bastard." Luckily, the end results are more than making up for the pressure.

"We've got lakes looking so good that you'll want to sit around and wait for sunrise just to see the reflections shimmering in the water"

SCOTT COWIE Senior Designer,
Dragon Empires





The Six Lobstermen Of The Apocalypse doesn't have the same ring to it.

STAR WARS GALAXIES: N EMPIRE DIVIDED

INPERSPECTIVE

EVERQUEST: NEW DAWN Reviewed Issue 125, Score 87% The original template for MMORPGs. Despite inferior graphics and the usual Dungeons & Dragons setting, EverQuest remains slightly smoother than Star Wars Galaxies due to a

more open format. **ANARCHY ONLINE**

Reviewed Issue 114, Score 82% Easier to get into than SWG, Anarchy Online also presents a more traditional cyber-setting with hyper-corporations and rebel factions. Combat is much easier but the story and setting don't make as much sense

Import only (approx £27.99) plus \$14.99 monthly subscription | Dev: Sony Online Entertainment | Pub: LucasArts (US) | ETA: Out Now (UK release to be confirmed) starwarsgalaxies.station.sony.com

REQUIRES PIII 933, 256MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card DESIRES PIII 2.0 GHz, 512MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card

A new hope for MMOGs, or merely an audience divided? George Jones ponders the meaning of life in the Star Wars universe



You won't find that blaster +4 against Ewoks in the bins.

FIRST EPISODE II

and now this? Much like the modern Star Wars movies, Star Wars Galaxies is technically superior but lacking in soul. It's a deep, complex gaming experience that feels utterly disconnected from the excitement and mystique of the universe it's based upon.

But not all hope is lost. In the online world, games can improve in just a few months. Unfortunately, Star Wars

Galaxies has a long way to go if it's going to warm gamers' hearts the way Hamill, Ford and the gang did way back in '77.

BOBA FETT? WHERE?

You begin by creating a character from a wide range of races and character classes. You can play as Human, Bothan, Mon Calamari, Rodian, Trandoshan, Twi'lek, Wookiee, or Darth Maul lookie-likees the Zabrak. Each race has certain

"Playing Star Wars Galaxies will make you feel like you're walking around a giant real-life studio"



"Hi, I'm Bob, a 39-year-old anal retentive from Spokane."

innate abilities and attribute modifiers - Bothans, for example, are quick but not very strong, while the reptilian Trandoshans are stronger than average, but clumsy and dumb. Even better, Galaxies offers so many options for customising your character's looks that it is rare to encounter a character who looks just like you. Quite a feat where the Wookiees

select a profession. While eventually your character can hunter to a bio-engineer, you of six starting professions artisan, brawler, entertainer, marksman, medic or scout. Thankfully, these first choices do not lock you into one career path. Instead, they provide your character with initial skills that

WOULD YOU LIKE A LAPDANCE?

THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION WAITS FOR ANOTHER MILLENNIA..

Want to make some quick, easy cash? One innovative player in Star Wars Galaxies set off a miniature trend of avarice and greed by becoming a private dancer.

An attractive Entertainer with a wide repertoire of dancing skills ("/FLOURISH 7!"), this 'performer' made a living from approaching single male adventurers in cantinas across the galaxy and promising them private dances for exorbitant amounts of credits. One adventurer reportedly gave 'Peaches' (her stage name) a whopping 16,000 credits for a mere five-minute dance. Just don't try it with a Wookiee or you'll be picking hairs out of your teeth for weeks.

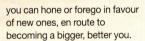
16,000 credits for a private dance? Dread to think how much for extras.

After choosing a race, you become anything from a bounty begin with a more simple choice

SECOND **OPINION**

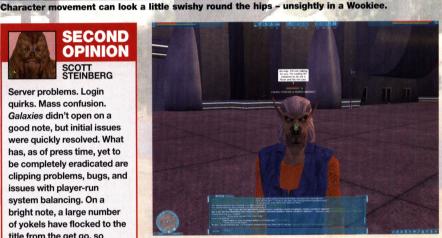
SCOTT

Server problems. Login quirks. Mass confusion. Galaxies didn't open on a good note, but initial issues were quickly resolved. What has, as of press time, yet to be completely eradicated are clipping problems, bugs, and issues with player-run system balancing. On a bright note, a large number of yokels have flocked to the title from the get go, so finding adventuring companions shouldn't be an issue. Getting and resolving missions, on the other hand, can be somewhat trying... the designers obviously want you to experiment with the system, but some direction would have been nice. Still, play gets tired quickly - it's as repetitive as your standard rat-killing MMOG, but here you're wasting stormtroopers. Given an economy in flux and a design model that isn't keved towards welcoming newbies, as was originally promised, it's hard not to be at least somewhat disappointed. For now, you'd best sit back and wait.



THE WOOKIEE WATUSI

Particularly interesting in Galaxies are non-combat oriented professions such as artisans and entertainers. Artisans are essentially crafters, skilled at building items and locating resources. Cleverly, they are encouraged to build and sell weapons and other objects through a simple reward



The see seed of

"No, I wasn't in the films. My agent wasn't the best."



"Meesa gonna get my head kicked in? How rude."

mechanism: every kill a player makes with a weapon crafted by an artisan delivers a small amount of experience points to the character who built the weapon. Later in the game. when a Galactic Civil war has been hinted at, artisans who have begun to explore the Hybrid and Elite-level professions will be able to build special battlefield structures that can turn the tide of war.

The entertainer profession is equally interesting. Entertainers can dance, play music, and even design holographic images for

other characters, healing minds and bodies with their art. Like J-Lo. Watching street performers dance their way to experience points in cities and populated settlements across the galaxy clearly shows the design team's Ultima Online roots.

Unfortunately, these noncombat professions are not that accessible to gamers new to online role-playing because they require intimidating special commands like "/FLOURISH 6". Being an entertainer or an artisan requires patience and more than a little creativity, but

WHAT KNOW YOU OF READY?

LET'S BE FRANK. YOUR CHANCES OF BECOMING A JEDI KNIGHT IN *STAR WARS GALAXIE*S ARE ABOUT AS LIKELY AS YOU ROLLING AROUND WITH CAMERON DIAZ



As one SWG community manager posted on the game's official forum, "You will likely not see many (if any) Jedi in-game for a long time (likely months)." The game's FAQ indicates that players have to use their primary character to 'open' a secret Force Sensitive character slot by completing a series of special missions that vary by server, character and world. You then create a character in the FS slot and develop that character's Force skills through usage and training. One hazardous, stakes-raising aspect of characters strong in the Force: if you perish before you reach Jedi Knight status, your character dies permanently, forcing you to create a brand new Force character.

Star Wars Galaxies might be missing a golden opportunity here, but Sony Online's balancing concerns are valid. A world filled with Jedi would be crazy. One thing is for sure, however: more casual players will never know the joys of the Jedi.

offers up a welcome departure from the usual early game rat and snake killing.

TATOOINE PARLOUR

After you choose your character and make your way through a tutorial that explains basic mechanics, it's time to choose a destination from which to begin your new life. Naboo, Corellia, Talus, and Tatooine await.

Your first step into the great wide open will likely be an impressive one, because Galaxies is easily the bestlooking MMORPG currently on the market. Settings Star Wars fans know and love well, such as the cantinas and other low-hung buildings at Mos Eisley, and Naboo's majestic towers and skyscrapers, have been faithfully recreated in such a way that it's hard not to gawk. At moments like these, playing Galaxies will make you feel like you're walking around a giant real-life studio.

The characters, creatures. and monsters in the game - both Al-controlled and human - look similarly fantastic, with smooth texture-mapping and fluid animations. While the occasional clipping does occur, and not all the animations are quite right, Galaxies easily exceeds the current standard



Adherence to the excitement of the films isn't high on the agenda.

Unfortunately, as Master Yoda would say, "Pretty pictures a great game do not make." For many, the awe and wonder at the gorgeous settings, hundreds of character types, and wide open universe will quickly mutate into frustration, confusion, and emptiness as it becomes apparent the only way to develop your character's abilities and skills involves a MMORPG shortcoming so prevalent it has its own nickname: Grinding.

HUNT AND GRIND

Four and a half years after the release of EverQuest, you'd think Sony Online would have figured out a more exciting way to immerse gamers in the Star Wars universe besides forcing us to s-l-o-w-l-y grind our way towards level-ups and character improvements by taking on the same old boring starter missions time and time again.

Bequeathed at Mission kiosks scattered across the universe and by talking to NPCs on various worlds, the quests here are no different than anything gamers have already seen: escort this person, destroy the insect creatures' nest, deliver these documents - isn't the Star Wars universe supposed to be more exciting than this? To be fair, later missions in the game do involve more action and group dynamics, but it requires an enormous amount of patience to get this far.

To break up the monotony of grinding, you can work on other skills such as land surveying and building weapons. Or you can chat with some of the half a

million other subscribers, although seeing a Wookiee say, "What's up, dude?" is a horrible downside, completely puncturing the Star Wars vibe.

Worse than the tedium of grinding out mission after mission is the buggy state of the game's quest system, which often breaks mid-mission. Example: after spending 45 minutes wandering the desert of Tatooine searching for Jabba's henchman (needed to negotiate a treaty), you finally find the guy, bring him back, and blam! Suddenly no one knows who you are. Including the mayor who gave you the quest.

Rest assured that Sony Online and LucasArts are working hard to fix this, but at launch this problem was so widespread that literally thousands of incidents were reported on the Galaxies message boards.

Even though most of the missions aren't very exciting, if you find the right NPC





Audiences for The Phantom Menace weren't huge.



The 'Bacca boys look for a good time.

characters, you'll wind up engaging in an escalating series of missions that may land you in various 'theme parks' - sets and environments straight from the movies like Jabba's Palace.

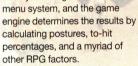
DON'T GET COCKY KID

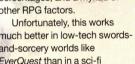
Combat in SWG is handled in a simplified fashion that mirrors EverQuest. You target your

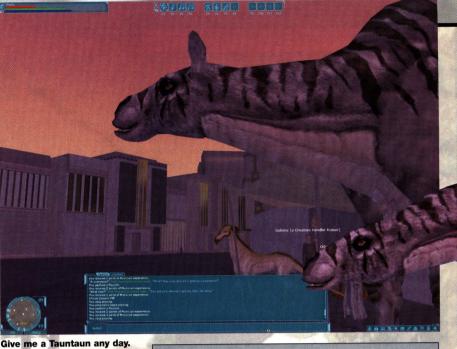
MISSED OPPORTUNITY

enemy via the game's radial

much better in low-tech swordsand-sorcery worlds like EverQuest than in a sci-fi environment. When laser







pistols and energy crossbows are the weapons, the welltrained inner gamer inside us quickly snaps into first-person shooter mode.

When you do kill a monster, the only rewards besides experience points are credits. In line with Galaxies' 'players only' philosophy - which is hyperfocused on a player-generated economy - no 'magical' weapons or items are dropped by opponents you kill.

At odds with that philosophy though, random violence does not exist in the Galaxies universe. One-on-one PvP only occurs when someone accepts your challenge to duel. And when it does occur, these shortterm battles are strictly head-tohead. Gamers expecting the thrill of leading the life of an outland robber will be sorely disappointed.

Wide-scale player versus player combat does exist, but only in designated areas named Battlefields. Here, the Empire and Rebel Alliance fight one another in an interesting game form that's part Diablo, part Counter-Strike.

Thankfully, death is gracefully handled. Instead of immediately kicking the space bucket the moment your ratings hit zero, your character becomes incapacitated (or 'incapped' in SWG parlance) for around a minute. If someone strikes you with a deathblow while you're incapped, you die and are reincarnated at the last city centre you visited or, if you were smart, the last cloning facility vou activated.

By allowing players to insure their items (for a price) before leaving a city centre, Galaxies allows you to avoid having to retrieve your belongings in the

A GLOBAL MARKET DIVIDED

AS IS PROBABLY APPARENT BY NOW, STAR WARS GALAXIES IS A US-ONLY RELEASE AT PRESENT.

Quite why Sony/LucasArts decided to bring the release date forward by half a year is open to more speculation than the Dale Winton marriage, but what is in no doubt is that releasing in such an obviously unfinished state has meant a wealth of problems for both the developers and the subscribers.

As we go to press, Activision (LucasArts publisher in the UK) has no official word on a European release (although it is available to buy and play on import) and there are no plans to offer support for anyone outside North America. Rumblings on the grapevine seem to suggest that we might well see SWG in our neck of the woods by Christmas. By which time most of the bugs, problems and omissions may well have been taken care of. If this is the case then we'll take another look at the game closer to that time. At the moment though, SWG is for die-hard Star Wars fans with access to a good importer only.

"Seeing a creature that looks like Chewbacca say, "What's up, dude?" really punctures the Star Wars vibe"

unfortunate case of death. Another nice touch is the game's new players' exemption, which grants newbies item insurance without the cost.

YOUR POWERS ARE WEAK

Star Wars Galaxies is unquestionably deep, perhaps the deepest of all MMOGs. With a massive eBay-like bartering system, a player-generated economy, and a plethora of career choices, it's also more than a little flexible

But at its heart, the whole experience doesn't feel all that different from EverQuest, which is a big problem for LucasArts, which has high hopes for converting non-online players to online gaming. To the newbie, however, monotonous quests and complicated character sheets are more intimidating than a flight simulator.

EverQuest fans and gamers familiar with the online experience will doubtless find some value in Galaxies, particularly as Sony fixes, improves and tweaks away. Who knows? In a year, it might be a worthwhile experience for all of us.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Gorgeous graphics
- ✓ Lots of options, professions, and choices
- Problems can be fixed
- X Repetitive, boring quests
- X Extremely buggy
- X Difficult for newbies to get into



Little more than EverQuest in space

MISSED MAYHEM

By outlawing random killing and crime in Star Wars Galaxies, Sony Online and LucasArts have artificially imposed a notion of good and evil onto players. This appears to be in direct contrast to the 'players only' philosophy of the game, which eschews random items for player-generated ones. If players are responsible for generating their own economy, shouldn't they also be responsible for policing themselves?

It's yer actual anarcho-syndicalist commune. In space.

Free software download, \$14.95 monthly subscription | Developer: Cyber Warrior Publisher: Cyber Warrior | ETA: Out Now | www.rubiesofeventide.com

REQUIRES P4 or better, 256MB RAM, 64MB graphics card DESIRES All that, but with at least 512MB RAM if you want to avoid long zone-loading times

Release first, patch later. So goes the MMOG mantra. Chris Anderson helps beta test yet another retail product





Bald horses are very trendy in the world of Eventide. Honest.

IT'S PRETTY much

taken for granted now that any new online RPG will be released in beta state with the developers promising better things to come. You can expect broken skills, broken quests, interface problems, lack of content, countless bugs, and many features that are suspiciously missing but - of course - will

INPERSPECTIVE

EVERQUEST: NEW DAWN Reviewed Issue 125, Score 87%

EverQuest is similar to Rubies Of Eventide, but just a little bit better [Understatement of the millennium – Edl

SHADOWBANE

Reviewed Issue 130, Score 70% Shadowbane, like ROE, has very flexible character development but full-on PvP, if that's what floats vour RPG boat

arrive in a future patch. In short, you get all the things you would expect from any game still a long way from going gold.

Who's at fault for this shameful practice? There's the developers of course, but while we're busy apportioning blame, let's ask ourselves who exactly is paying for this rubbish. That's right, people. If you keep paying for it, they'll keep doing it - each title arriving in worse condition than the last. Who knows, maybe this time next year we'll be reviewing the latest retail alpha product in ZONE?

With all this in mind, let me introduce you to the latest 'beta' doing the rounds, charging monthly subscriptions to fund its ongoing development.

WELCOME TO OUR WORLD

First impressions are unfortunately lasting ones. In the case of Rubies Of Eventide, the first thing you notice is that the camera angles appear to be designed to make indoor movement as difficult as possible. The 'static' thirdperson view requires constant adjustment unless you're happy running in a straight line for the entirety of the game. Conversely, the 'locked' third-person view

pans the camera as you move, but for some reason favours zooming in on your back so nothing around you is visible. Move a little bit and it zooms out. Turn a corner and it zooms right back in again. Not a problem outdoors, but in cities and buildings, simple movement becomes a constant struggle. There's also a first-person view, but since mouse-look is

you can't easily pan the view around. While you're discovering the delights of constantly changing perspectives, you'll also notice that the graphic design is a little strange. Every character in the game appears to have been designed with a younger audience in mind. Cutesy graphics and bright colours are the order of the day, and for no apparent reason every character from every race has abnormally big feet. It's fair to say that ROE didn't get off to the best of starts.

disabled.

A CLASS APART

It's a common MMORPG complaint that character development is too limited, and that creating a truly personalised character is next to impossible. In this area, Rubies Of Eventide shines. All the race and class types you would expect from a fantasy RPG are available. You can choose from humans, elves,

"If you keep paying for it, they'll keep doing it - each title arriving in worse condition than the last"



Massivley multiplayer kebabs.



Not exactly the busiest of markets, but it's a start.



Combat in all its glory.



Dungeons offer the traditional monsters/loot RPG ratio.

ogres - all the usual suspects then create a class such as druid, warrior, summoner, necromancer and a whole host of others. This in itself is no great achievement, but once you have made a base class, you can train yourself in any school of magic or combat that you like by spending development points accrued by killing things in combat. With this method, you can customise your character to the point where you get the skills you want, and so, make the fantasy character you've always dreamed of.

In fact, the only other game of this type which gives you such

flexibility with character development is Shadowbane, and even there you're largely prohibited from certain skills once you follow a certain path. ROE pretty much lets you loose on most of the skills in the game. To our minds, this is the one aspect that will really shine if the game ever takes off.

AFTER YOU SIR

Combat in ROE is a little odd to say the least. You can set the speed of the combat, slowing it down to practically turn-based in nature, or leaving it at full speed in which case you get



Magic lacks the pyrotechnic excess of other games.

something approaching realtime. None of the fights I came across were so challenging that the need to slow things down would have been of help, and by and large the battles are fairly unspectacular. There are a couple of things worth pointing out though. If you play a character that can both cast spells and use melee, you'll have to switch between the two modes mid-fight. There's no easy way of managing both aspects,

and since boosting spells can't even be used prior to a battle starting, the whole procedure is a chore. Nor can you cycle through potential victims via hotkeys, instead having to click on each target manually before attacking them. Combat mechanics are being 'looked at' in a future patch, but for now fighting is less than intuitive. In summary, Rubies

Of Eventide is a fairly average online RPG with below average graphics and many of the expected

NEWBIES OF EVENTIDE

IT'S A SHARING, CARING COMMUNITY OUT THERE



Be nice to them and they'll be nice to you.

One of RoE's redeeming features is the friendly community and game staff. There are GMs in the newbie zones on standby to answer any questions you might have about the game, and the players go out of their way to help each other. One of them came up to me and gave me a great big sword telling me it would help my early levels, which I duly put to good use twatting things on the head. I only later discovered it was actually extremely valuable. I have never seen this happen in any other game but EverQuest, where this kind of behaviour is the norm. Score one for the player community then, but whether the GMs will be as freely available if server figures start growing is quite another thing.

> features "still to be implemented" (as I write, crafting skills have yet to make an appearance, for example). This may go some way to explaining why the one and only server that's live at the moment has a maximum of between 60 and 80 players at peak-time.

So, the choice is yours. You could download the game for free, play it for a trial period and then decide for yourself if there's any potential here. Or take my advice and check it out towards the end of the year - at which point it may have gone from glorified 'beta' to something closer to what's expected from a retail product. Or better still you could just forget all about it and wait for EverQuest 2.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Extremely flexible character development
- Friendly player community and
- game staff ✓ Um... it has trees?
- X Underwhelming graphics
- X Clumsy combat
- X Major features still missing



Try again in six months

LIVE FOR SPEED

■ £12 | Dev: Scawen Roberts, Eric Bailey and Victor van Vlaardingen | ETA: Downloadable Now | Players: 1-12 | Ifs.racesimcentral.com | Size: 46MB

Not so much a man of speed as a man of a touch of snuff and a nice cream cake, Paul Presley checks out the latest online racer heading for glory



be all well and good when it comes to shooting virtual terrorists with virtual guns, but one gaming arena undernourished by online action is that of the racer. There-have been attempts in the past to cater for armchair drivers eRacer and Motor City Online are the most notable failures. and a pocket community of Grand Prix Legends fans is still going strong - but by and large, if you can't shoot it, it ain't getting played.

Hoping to change perceptions are the three guys behind Live For Speed. In basic terms, it's a car physics demo, but it's because it's such a realistic one that the racing side of the game works as well as it does. Handling is spot on, with slides, handbrake turns and controlled skids all feeling very realistic. Plus, because you can customise your entire car, from spring stiffness to paint job, then take your pride and joy onto the



"Handling is spot on, with slides, handbrake turns and controlled skids all feeling very realistic"

Another busy day in the ZONE office.

Net to face off against a dozen others, you really feel as though you've something to prove to the faceless masses in virtual land.

The community is small at the moment, although the level of skill on display is frighteningly high. There's not much of a single-player game on show the Al isn't functional in any real sense and there's a very

obvious bug that makes unlocking the two top cars a breeze - but LFS has been designed to be played online and it works better than anyone could have imagined.

CZONE ERDICT

Worth living for



Of course the art boys get to have 'fancy looking' cars.

Just testing the off-road setting (ahem).

INTERNATIONAL NLINE SOCCER V1.0

www.planethalflife.com/ios/

TOTAL CONVERSION

Many, many (many) years ago, Paul Presley 'discovered' Kick Off and forever changed the world of footie games. Can lightning strike twice?



I was (literally) nowhere near him, ref!

A FEW YEARS ago the PC ZONE office was held hostage. Not by crazed terrorist groups or armed robbers after our stash of nazi gold, but by a game. Not even a full game, but an early alpha demo. Of a mod.

Proball was a Quake III conversion that kept us at our desks every morning, every lunchtime, every evening and most of the other parts of the day. Tempers flared, arguments soared, mice were smashed in frustration, and several jobs were put on the line after heated words off the pitch.

I mention this not because there's a new version in town (although it did recently 'go Beta'), but because now Half-Life has gotten in the act with International Online Soccer. Who needs your FIFAs or your Pro Evo's when good old Half-Life can give you all the footie action you could ever ask for? Well, as it stands at the moment, IOS will give you a fun, but hardly authoritative kickabout.

Shot power is tricky to gauge, dependant on how high you're looking when you shoot, and dribbling isn't exactly the easiest

thing to get the hang of, but an intuitive passing option and the inclusion of 'aftertouch' and sliding tackles makes for some amusing and rewarding play.

Servers are a bit thin on the ground and it's rare to find one with a full complement of 11 against 11, but the potential is there if the community grows. One request - smaller pitches for five-a-side games please.

CZONE /ERDICT

Back of the net

THE THIRD REICH V1.1

TOTAL

on the www.thethirdreich.com

SIZE 102Mb REQUIRES Full version of Unreal Tournament (v436)

We'll fight them on the beaches, apparently... says Tony Lamb



The new pastel camouflage scheme in action.



German easy chair technology was far superior to ours.

YOU'VE GOT TO

admire the balls of *The Third Reich* team. Online servers are packed with fans of *Battlefield 1942*, *Medal Of Honor* and *Day Of Defeat. UT2003* is surging ahead with shedfuls of spinetingling mods, *UT2004* isn't that far away. So they go and release a team/class-based WWII mod for the original *Unreal Tournament*. Blimey!

It's good too, make no mistake. From its cinematic opening movie, atmospheric and detail-rich maps to its theatreaccurate weapons and uniforms, it really does show what this venerable platform can do. Bot support is good too (one built-in feature of UT that always did knock Half-Life into a cocked hat) and even in single-player games you'll get the feeling that while your opponents might not be geniuses they're more than capable of sending vou home in a wooden box.



"Schnell, aim für der Ryan Brothers."

Multiplayer games are a blast, but online servers are limited so LAN play is best for now. Skins and animations are fine, if a bit wooden – although this should improve with version 1.2.

The only thing going against TTR is the age of UT. It's a classic game, but it just isn't very glamourous next to more recent titles and this could hold TTR back, which

would be desperately unfair. With eight excellent maps (D-Day is one of the best we've seen), 11 class options, locational damage, voice commands and more, *TTR* is one of the best WWII mods around and right up there with the best *UT* outings. It's a star – support it!

PCZONE VERDICT 88

Very good indeed. Bring on the UT2003 version

IL-2 STURMOVIK: FORGOTTEN BATTLES

£34.99 | Pub: Ubi Soft | Dev: 1C/Maddox Games ETA: Out Now | www.il2sturmovik.com | Players: 32

REQUIRES PIII 800, 256MB RAM, 32MB 3D Card DESIRES PIII 1.2, 512MB RAM, 64MB 3D Card

Can a great single-player flight sim cut the mustard online? **Daniel Emery** takes to the skies...

AMERICA Online has been extolling the virtues of its latest software (AOL 8) with such catchy phrases as 'Inov8' and 'Communic8' while failing to mention the most popular Internet pastime, 'Masturb8'.

Blame it on lag. I always do.

But the Net's not all Kleenex and porn. The WWII flight sim is making a bid for the Internet crown, with two very different 'styles' of game: massively multiplayer titles such as WarBirds and Aces High – with anything up to 800 players on a single server – and the 'LAN on the Net' types, which support multiples of eight.

IL-2 Sturmovik: Forgotten
Battles falls firmly in the latter
category, with a maximum of

32 players. Graphically, it's light years ahead of the opposition – with some of the best weather and cloud effects we've seen to date – and in a positive move, the developer is encouraging players to design their own skins.

However, if you're used to the frantic action of MMOs, you'll be disappointed with *IL-2* online. Even with a full server, you're only going to get 16 opponents

(assuming sides are balanced and you don't mind wading through the



Not the most crowded of games, unfortunately.

laborious login procedures). Of course, this leads to some intense dogfights, as opposed to the MMO 'gangbangs', but you'll most likely spend more time flying than actually fighting. Good for the purists, bad for the adrenalin junkies.

It's still the best singleplayer flight sim on the market bar none. Online though, it's a tough call. For the hardcore flight sim fans, it's a 'must have'. For the casual gamer however, the MMOs should be your first port of call.

PCZONE VERDICT
FULL REVIEW (ISSUE 128) 92
MULTIPLAYER SCORE 88
Great game - shame about the servers

EREADERS' CHALLENGE

Your chance to win big, big, BIG! prizes in the tournament of tournaments...

YOU'RE THE BEST. You know it, your keyboard knows it, your desk-dwelling collection of Star Wars figures know it. But we don't - yet. Which is why your ever-loving friends here at PC ZONE are teaming up with the excellent gaming boffins at Jolt and the generous

souls of Gainward to give you and your fellow clan members the chance to prove to us just how 'best' you really are.

The PC ZONE Readers' Challenge is looking to crown both the greatest solo player and the finest team reading these words. Over a series of four three-month rounds we'll separate the wheat from chaff out there, ending up with the eight clans and four soloists going head-to-head in our Grand LAN Final. Prizes will be awarded to each round winner, with the eventual victors taking home the top prizes. Thanks to Gainward, we'll be

providing the winning teams with no less than five top-of-the-range

video cards, while the winning single-player will walk off with a state-of-the-art gaming PC.

Registration for round one should be starting as you read this and will see clans battling across the WWIIthemed levels of Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory and Half-

Life mod Day Of Defeat. Solo players get to strut their stuff on Unreal Tournament 2003. We'll announce the round two games in a couple of months time.

The tournament rules are simple. Whichever team or player is leading their game's ladder at noon on Monday October 20, 2003 wins round one, secures a slot in the grand

> final and wins both a year's free subscription to ZONE as well as a game of their choice.

To sign up for the tournament all you need to do is log on to www.pczone.iolt.co.uk and join the ladder of your choice. Teams are restricted to five players per side (regardless of clan size) and the tournament is open to UK residents only. The full list of rules (including gamespecific rules) can be found at the PC ZONE/Jolt website listed above. We'll be printing monthly updates on the ladders, match reports and team focuses each month.

What are you waiting for? This is the chance to prove your chops to the whole PC ZONE world! Log on to www.pczone.jolt.co.uk and get fragging!

SPONSORED BY







Work together, fight together, win together.

FIGHTCLUB

FIRST RULE OF FIGHT CLUB: PC ZONE OWNZ JØØ

REJOICE. brethren, for Fight Club lives on! Mr Korda's final game in charge last month was as action-packed and emotionally draining as they come, but the increased turnout to watch the passing of the torch was most welcome. The fighting was intense, with ZONE's Fight Club virgins Will "Batsphinx" Porter and Jamie "BraveArt" Malcolm making an impressive debut, and even managing to get on the scoreboard (albeit briefly).

Standouts among the readers include SwitchlcRuel^, Patch, Psionic -]H2K[-SGT and [TNC]Morph who finally makes it into our Hall Of Fame. Particular applause (and hilarity) goes to the unknown Scottish voice-comms user who loudly proclaimed "I doooon't knoooo wha' ah'm dooooin'!" before being shot in the head by all and sundry. This was later followed by a round of audio Schwarzenegger impressions, with Patch taking requests such as, "Who is yer dahddy and vot does he dooo?" Special thanks also to venerable admins Metalface and Rex Mundi keeping things running smoothly.

for all the info This month we're taking a well-deserved breather to allow our blistered mouse fingers to heal, but Fight Club returns to the fray stronger than ever in issue #134. The date is below, the connection details can all be found at www.zonegames.co.uk, along with the scores for the last match and the details of all our PC ZONE/Jolt game servers. So get it in your electronic diaries now.

www.zonegames.co.uk

FREE-FOR-ALL

THURSDAY AUGUST 7

6.30pm - 9.00pm

Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory

LAN ROVER

STEVE 'SCALPER' RANDALL PARTIES LIKE HIS PING'S 19 NOT 99

Strange month this one, with nearly everyone deciding to host a LAN at the same time. At the start of the month you have a choice of three, all on from August 1 to 3. They are:

www.centralanuk.co.uk, which has 44 slots to fill at £25 a head. This will suit you if you're near to Staffordshire Moorlands for their second event.

Slightly more established, hence the name, is Savlan10. This is a 300-person event in Coventry, costing spectators £5 a day and players £20 for one day, £35 for two days and £45 for three days. The longer they run, the bigger they get, it seems. Expect loads of competitions. Details available from

www.savagelan.com

Another event that charges £5 a day for spectators is www.scotlanparty.com being held in Larbet, Scotland. £20 in advance or £30 on the door, but be warned this is the seventh scotlan and, with only 80 available spots, you should

think of booking. These next two start on August 22 and continue until August 25. The only thing you need ask yourself is "Do I like big events or little events?"

The first, smaller event, is the regular www.lanse.co.uk event. They're up to 17 now and have capped the places at 30. The event's in High Wycombe and will cost just £20 a head.

Finally, the big one, i17 (www.multiplay.co.uk). A veritable army of 600 can be accomodated at their venue in Newbury, making this one for the sociable LANer, Pizzas can be delivered to you at your desk and you can enjoy a switched 10/100/1000 network as well as a multitude of competitions. Costs are vet to be confirmed but expect to pay around £60 for the three days.

That's all for this month.

Next month I'll bring you a report from i16. Till then, Scalper out.



Prove your soloing skills with UT 2003.



Teamplay is key for Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory.

FIX... EVERQUEST

EACH MONTH WE ASK YOU TO OFFER YOUR ADVICE TO THE FACELESS MULTINATIONALS CREATING OUR VIRTUAL GAMESCAPES.
THIS MONTH... HOW WOULD YOU IMPROVE EVERQUEST?

FROM Csdaveůk

One thing that's never tackled is sport – maybe bring a sport online. Either start a fantasy game going (Bloodbowl for example), or use a proper sport-like football.

FROM Gangster15

Get rid of it. People are randomly growing beards and a couple of my mates have it, and now they look permanently stoned.

FROM Byargas

Lose the jargon. Release a patch so when people ask for a SOW (spirit of wolf) they get turned into a pig. Add high pitched squeals for extra comedy factor.

FROM _RicH_

Best not get rid of it completely, or before we know it Maxis will buy the name and then No1 in the charts will be *The Sims:* EverQuest, doubling the amount of losers... er, players.



EverQuest: best thing is to get rid of it?

FROM LuvvlyJubbly

They should make it so that you get a cheaper rate of subscription if you can send in proof that you have a mighty beard.

NEXT MONTH

How would you fix... EVE Online?

Email your ideas and contact details to online.zone@pczone.co.uk, subject line: "Fix... EVE Online". Or write to: Fix... EVE Online, PC ZONE, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD. A PC Zone goodie-bag for any we print!

GUILDHALL

ARE YOU FEELING SAD AND LONELY?

Looking for that special group to share your love of online gaming? Check out some of the guilds and clans currently recruiting members and soon you too could find happiness, togetherness and the sense of belonging that you only get from shooting rocket launchers at people.

CLAN HeMan

CONTACT Mongoose

WEBSITE www.zonegames.co.uk/admins.html

MAIN GAMES Counter-Strike

DETAILS We are 'officially' the longest running *PC ZONE* Servers clan (since 1999). The aim was to create a nonserious clan, made up of fairly decent players – but able to have fun and take losing well. So many clans claim this, but rarely last so long, or are able to laugh in the face of defeat like we do.

CLAN Aumakua

CONTACT Mako [OwP]

WEBSITE www.aumakua.tk

MAIN GAMES Day of Defeat

DETAILS We are a UK Day of Defeat clan currently accepting new members. We have participated in Blueyonder League 3, and have frequent friendlies against other clans. Send an email to aumakua@barrysworld.com if you're interested, or take a look at the website for more details.

CLAN The Art of Warfare

CONTACT Paul 'Psirus' Dunn

WEBSITE www.theartofwarfare.org

MAIN GAMES Planetside

DETAILS The game we are recruiting members for is *Planetside*. We need to build up our European squad. We do play other games, although *Planetside* is the main one. The website has more details, and all anyone has to do to join is fill out the application form there.

CLAN BBK (British Born Killers)

CONTACT [BBK^OldManny]

WEBSITE www.bbkclan.co.uk

MAIN GAMES Counter-Strike, Battlefield 1942

DETAILS We're a bit of a mature clan (all over-18 – ten are nearly knocking 40). The only rules are that players must be over-18 and be able to use voice comms. We're looking for someone who plays regularly and who plays for fun, not just frags. We do aim to win, we just don't take is so seriously that if we lose we kick the cat.

CLAN -=WWE=-

CONTACT VoodooGod

WEBSITE www.wwe-forum.tk

MAIN GAMES The Specialists (Half-Life Mod)
DETAILS -=WWE=- stands for We Whore Everything –
not the wrestling fiasco! Sure, we may not be the most
evolved clan to grace the Earth, but we are doing our
damned hardest to get the best into our team! Especially
considering the amount of players who play The
Specialists (around 2000).

CLAN The HorDe

CONTACT crazy_warrior

WEBSITE www.hordegaming.com

MAIN GAMES AOE2, The Conquerors, Cossacks, RON, Counter-Strike, C&C Generals, Praetorians

DETAILS We are trying to spread our clan into RTS games, RPGs and shooters. We don't care about skills or attitude, we just like to have fun. If you want to join our little band of crazy, fun, happy gamerz, ask for a tryout on our site. Come party with The HorDe!

To feature in Guildhall simply send your details and no more than 50 words describing your group to online.zone@pczone.co.uk (subject line: GUILDHALL) or to Guildhall, *PC ZONE*, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD.



Getting started in... **ONLINE:** HE SECOND GENESIS

MMOGs aren't exactly the easiest of games for online novices, so let us ease the burden a little with some handy hints to get you off the ground. This month, Richie Shoemaker helps you battle beyond the stars

CAREER MOVES

It's not what you're born with but how you develop that matters most. Poring over race, starting attribute points, schools and skills isn't as important as you think. It helps if you think ahead about the career you want, whether you'll be nice or nasty, a solo pilot or part of a tight-knit pirate gang or corporation wing. The great thing about Eve is that characters are flexible - skills can be bought and trained in whichever order your wallet will allow, so you should never feel that you picked the wrong skills when you began and have to start over.





NEVER STOP LEARNING

From the moment you start, to when you cancel your subscription, the one thing your main character should always be doing. whether online or off, is learning. You can switch skill training without penalty, even if you haven't fully levelled the previous one up. Always plan ahead and use the time away from your PC to get one of your higher ranked skills up to level 5 - which can take well over a month. Try to buy skills such as Iron Will or Spatial Awareness early on - these will increase your attributes and considerably reduce learning times.



TAKE YOUR TIME

There's no getting away from the fact that Eve is a difficult game to get to grips with, both in terms of the sheer size of the universe, and due to the machinations of players, corporations and factions. But don't worry, there's no hurry to get anywhere just yet. Take your time to explore the interface, keep one eye on your Corporation Chat Channel (you'll learn more from other people in an hour than you will reading any number of strategy guides... cough), and follow the early tutorial missions and Agent missions at your leisure.



MAKE MINE A DOUBLE

Mining is the easiest method to make money. As a miner you shouldn't be flying your standard-issue frigate for more than a few hours before upgrading. Avoid systems that have a security rating below 0.7 (pirates love patrolling asteroid fields) and don't bother mining Veldspar or Scordite, as the reward isn't great. A good trick is to jettison ore as you're mining it, then bookmark warp points to haul it all back in quick jumps - although make sure the system you're in has a refinery, otherwise you're looking at a long haul. Watch out for pilots with thieving hands though.

TRADING SPACES

Trading goods can be very lucrative, but it's almost as dangerous as mining in low-security systems. A sizeable cargo hold is a must, but more than that you'll need a decent wedge of capital to buy goods in the first place. As well as value, each item has weight and size attributes, so initially trade only in items that take up little space. Consider buying Cargo Expanders, but be aware that these slow down your ship - not good when pirates are chasing you to the local warpgate. If you don't have afterburners installed on your ship, don't bother trading.



POP-UP PIRATES

As soon as you warp into a system check the Local Chat tab on your chat interface to see how many PC ships are around. Be wary - especially near the system entry and exit points - as this is where player-controlled pirate groups like to hang out. When entering asteroid belts you are more likely to be targeted by NPC pirate gangs patrolling each field, so use your scanner to find them quickly and if there are more than you can handle, especially if there is a cruiser in the vicinity, turn the hell around and run like the wind.



MR FIXIT

Repairing your ship can be a very costly exercise. If you intend to go up against pirates - never wise, but bounty hunting can be profitable - make sure you invest in an Armour Repairer and, if you can afford it, a Hull Repairer too. Both are expensive, but the cost can easily be covered after just a few fights. If you're going on a long looting patrol, take them with you in your cargo hold but drop them off at a nearby station. Then set off on your hunting trip and come back whenever you need to fix up your ship.



GUNS & AMMO

You won't get far without weapons, but which ones are best? Generally, if you want laser weapons (medium range, medium damage), be aware that these drain your Capacitor in seconds. So train skills that increase your power and recharge rates. If you're after projectile weaponry (short-range, med-high damage), look into manufacturing your own ammo, as it costs a fortune. Hybrid weapons - which require both ammo and capacitor power - deliver significant damage. And if your ship allows it, leave space for a missile launcher, especially if you have a slow ship that takes forever to get into firing range.



GO GO POWER ARRANGERS

To do anything worthwhile your ship must be fitted with modules, which can be installed into either high slots (weapons and energy transfer systems), medium slots (shields, ECM) or low slots (extra armour, shields, cargo bays). Additionally, each piece of kit or module you install requires both CPU capacity and power to juice it. Some items are heavy draws on CPU (mining lasers being a good example), while others can really drain your power levels. Whichever career you choose to follow, training skills that boost base levels of CPU, power, capacitor and shields are a real must.

COMPANY POLICY

If leading a Corporation to fame and fortune is for you, remember that it's a time-consuming business. Plan your company's goals before you start - mining, manufacturing, bounty hunting, piracy, etc - as the more avenues you explore, the more skills you will need. It's well worth assigning appropriately skilled employees to lead research, security and manufacturing divisions. If you do start a Corp, check on people who apply to join and don't assign them powers too readily - there are dozens of CEOs who have had members empty the corporation hanger of precious ore, and leave moths in the company wallet.



TTLEFIELD 1942

Tony Lamb slips on his fatigues to investigate the BF1942 community

My, how times have changed. I once spent days typing a single-player tank battle program into my venerable BBC Micro, and despite all the effort it was crap. Nowadays, the US Army uses multiplayer shooters to train its soldiers. At the moment, the WWII-inspired Battlefield 1942 is looking set to finally topple Counter-Strike as the daddy of online scrapping. What makes BF1942 so great is that not only is the vanilla game a gem, but everything in it can be tweaked too. Maps, skins, sounds, weapons, vehicles... you name it, the modding community have welcomed it with open arms. And here's the best.





DESERT COMBAT (TOTAL CONVERSION MOD)

www.desertcombat.com

This is something special. DC changes BF1942 so that the fighting becomes modern day - currently it's all in Iraq but more theatres are anticipated - and brings in suitably modern vehicles and weapons. M1 tanks, A10s, F16s, Hinds, SCUD launchers and more pack its 180+ Mb file size, making this treat-filled number an utterly brilliant mod.



EXPERIENCE WWII (MOD)

s9rm.nucleardays.com/

Previously titled Solder9's Realism Mod, EWWII offers more effective weapons (you'll learn to make better use of cover and keep your ammo topped), new vehicles and new skins - accurately reflecting the fighting forces involved. There is a downside - you'll need the Road To Rome expansion pack. But if you've got it you're onto a winner.



TANELORN DC **SOUNDPACK 0.75** (SOUND MOD)

www.fileplanet.com/download.asp x?f=125391

Sound mods for BF1942 are thin on the ground, but a couple for Desert Combat do exist, and at 63Mb, Tanelorn's is the most comprehensive, boasting replacement effects for a host of weapons and vehicles actually recorded from the real things. It's got good radio chatter, too.



PLANET BATTLEFIELD (FANSITE)

www.planetbattlefield.com

With a feast of news, mods, maps, hosted sites, reviews and more links than you can shake a stick at, the ubiquitous Planet Battlefield is the biggest single source of BF1942 goodies around. It's a bit mainstream, and there are many others (www.bf1942files.com & www.eagames. com/official/battlefield1942/home.jsp to name but two), but it's a good start.



BAGHDAD DAWN 勰 (MAP)

www.lanclan.com

Baghdad may have fallen but the fighting isn't over yet, and this great effort from LANCLAN is the first in a campaign series that puts you on the ground at Saddam International Airport (and the surrounding area) as the Coalition forces close in on Saddam. Beta rules apply, but it's as topical as they come.



CORAL SEA (MAP)

www.eagames.com/official/ battlefield1942

Spent too much time waiting for planes? This official Pacific Theatre map is all about them, with no less than 24 available to keep joystick-jockeys happy. Defend your carrier, man the anti-aircraft guns and watch your tail. BF1942's no flight sim, but for quick dogfighting action and plenty of thrills, this takes some beating.



1942 WEENIE MOVIE (MOVIE)

www.fileplanet.com/files/110000/1 11289.shtml

Common sense move aside - the nutters are in town. This is one of the smallest fan movies created in the BF1942 community, but it shows what can be done with some dedication, a heap of imagination and far too much spare time. Eminem tunes and more head banging action than a Metallica gig. Class.



BATTLECRAFT 1942 BETA 1.0 (MAP EDITOR)

www.battlecraft1942.com

At last comes the official map editor for BF1942. It's still in beta, so fans of the current third-party fave from MadBull (www.flashbots.co.uk/madbull) needn't panic, but Battlecraft is all-inclusive so it's easy to create RFA map files. It makes from-scratch creation much less daunting.

STEVE HILL'S OURST

Never say never again. Steve Hill did and look where it got him...



MY NAME is Gubkak. I am a Shamanic Troll and I worship the Prince of Hate. Don't worry, I'm not suffering a psychotic episode (yet), I'm simply revisiting the wonderful and frightening world of EverQuest, where men are elves and women are quite possibly men. Due to popular demand, I've been summoned to try and make some sense of it all, while also addressing my phobia of all things online. Further MMOGs (as Presley insists on calling them) will follow, but for now I'm being sent to Norrath, which is like being sent to Coventry, but even bleaker.

"I attempt to swim but succeed only in plunging myself deeper. Flailing around like a fat man in a tub of lard"



The sinking feeling of despair

With my character selected, I am dispatched to Neriak, City of The Dark Elves and Trolls. As the name suggests, it's an unglamorous place, and the inhabitants are fittingly ugly, their unblinking eyes judging me for the troll I have become. I attempt to strike up a conversation with a particularly grotesque character called Ootor, who, dispensing with any pleasantries, simply offers to sell me a cloth veil. Searching my inventory, I find what I believe to be 20 pieces of gold, although Ootor is suitably unimpressed when I attempt to pay him in breadcakes.



There never seems to be a Cloak of Meaningful Existence when you actually need one.

Stumbling around my new environment, further goods are proffered - weapons, spells, slippers - and I appear to be trapped in some kind of medieval shopping mall (think Milton Keynes but with thinner more attractive inhabitants). Considering I don't have a pot to piss in, this is somewhat frustrating. Rapidly tiring of window shopping, I spot a rodent, and remembering my previous adventures, attempt to attack it. If you've ever tried to punch a rat to death, you'll know it's a laborious process, and I take a few nasty bites before finally laying the beast to rest. I don't remember it being this difficult, and after a few more punch-ups I consult my inventory and sheepishly arm myself with a club, which makes it a quicker, if no less tedious affair.

GIRL TROUBLE

The first human interaction comes when I congratulate Bazu, a fellow troll, on his ratslaying prowess. "Good job", I say. "Thanks," says Bazu. A competent rodent-basher he might be, but his grammar isn't up to much, as evidenced by his next interjection: "how to me get outside." An elfin woman called Spahn also chips in with "were the exit?" and it's like the blind leading the blind. Another elf-woman called Shadowing seems to know what she's doing, but runs too fast for my lumbering hulk to keep up with. Bitch.

Slaying the odd rat to pass the time, I actually go up a level before finally finding the exit. Emerging into the city, it wasn't really worth the wait, a largely dank arena populated by sinister looking guards. There's an attractive water feature at the centre, although it soon loses its appeal when I misjudge the edge and plunge headlong into its icy depths. Gagging for air, I attempt to swim but succeed only in plunging myself deeper. Flailing around like a fat man in a bath of lard, I manage to get my head above water and contrive some kind of doggy-



Meaningful conversation isn't EQ's strong point.

paddle that eventually leads

Drenched and penniless, spirits are low. Morgalaneth Tal'Raeleon is enveloped by a cadeau of flame, but it does little to lighten the mood. He does offer some hope though when he says he can sort me out with a pair of Sandals of the Spurn'd Initiate. Sounds interesting, but it seems that I will first need to acquire two blood-drenched cloaks, two snake scales, one ruined bear pelt and two bandages. You can't get that lot at Safeways, and I politely decline.

HAIR PIE

Rapidly losing the will to live, by chance I bump into Exterminator Gilea, a pest control expert with a contract to rid the city of rodents. It's a big job and she says she'll be able to bung me a few quid if I help out by bringing her four rat's whiskers. Finally, someone who talks my language. Rats I can do, and I set about the quest with renewed vigour. Crushing a hapless rodent to death, I loot its corpse for whiskers. Nothing.

a rodent's co

Another rat, another blank. What kind of sick joke is this? Finally, a dead rat yields a set of whiskers, followed a few rats later by another. Whiskerless rats appear to outnumber the hirsute by about 20 to one, and I spend the best part of an hour with no further reward, even teaming up with the equally frustrated (and strangely alluring) Cinthea. Losing hope, Loffer the two sets of whiskers to Gilea, who takes them and stares at me blankly, offering nothing in return.

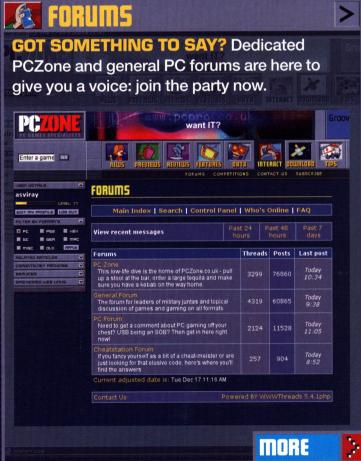
I am a failed rat-catcher in a fantasy world, and I'm not even my own boss. I fall to my knees and weep. I am a troll and I am alive.





IF NOT, YOU'RE MISSING OUT ON...





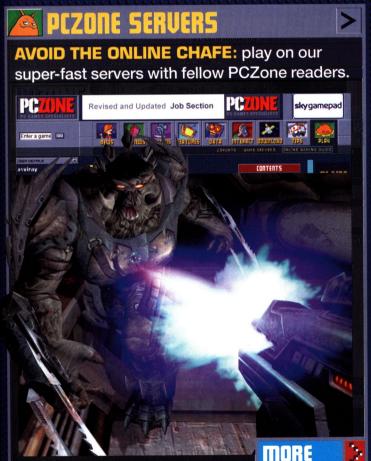








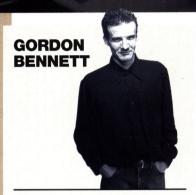
CHEATSTATION





HARDWARE

ALL THE LATEST NEWS AND REVIEWS FROM THE WORLD OF PC HARDWARE



■ ALL EXCITED Phil Wand

Will it run Doom III? Will it run Half-Life 2? Yes! It's exciting to know that the hardware required to play these games the way the developers intended is now on the shelves. The Half-Life 2 preview, which sunk jaws across the planet and helped Valve win Best of Show at this year's E3, was running on a 256MB Radeon 9800 Pro, and everyone's favourite space marine was brought to life in Doom III by a big GeForce FX. The latest, greatest and priciest in a long line of NVIDIA GPUs - the ultra-cool, ultra-quiet 5900 series is now at your local retailer and won't be superseded before the Doom III launch. So you can rest easy knowing that your top dollar purchase won't suddenly be old hat before you've had a change to use it in anger. See page 122 for my verdict.

Despite a lull in sales right now, early indications are that the FPS double whammy from id and Valve will whip up a storm of demand for hardware like the 5900 and 9800, and a huge spendfest has been forecast for this Christmas and the New Year. Half-Life 2 has been in Amazon.co.uk's top ten best seller list for weeks – a country mile ahead of Doom, I might add – despite the fact that the Gordon Freeman comeback is available on pre-order only.

Yes, even with an Autumn launch date, *Half-Life 2* is already topping the Summer charts. Suck on that, Harry Bloody Potter.

"In essence 64-bit means bigger. A whole lot bigger"

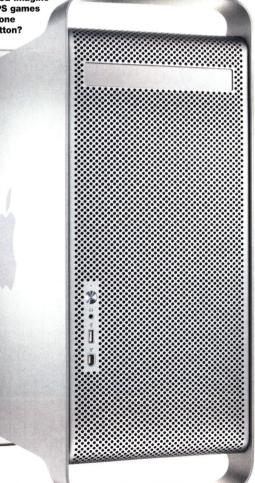
WORLD'S FASTEST PC AIN'T NO PC

The new Power Mac G5, with dual 2GHz 64-bit IBM POWER4 processors, each with 1GHz front-side bus is fast. But as a gamer, do you want one?

WHAT IN THE name of Bill Gates is a Macintosh doing in *PC ZONE*? Before you cancel your subscription and phone up to complain, let me present two very good reasons as to why it's here. The most important news is that the G5 is the world's first 64-bit desktop, and together with the upcoming AMD Athlon 64, marks a computing milestone.

At this point, I should make it clear that we consumers do not need 64-bit processors at the moment. 64-bit processors won't do squat for current games, and even if they did, we'd all have to upgrade everything, from the chip and motherboard to the operating system. Apple has a grand 64-bit vision however, as does AMD, and as we've learned we must never be short-sighted when it comes to technology. As Ken Olson, Founder of DEC, is so often quoted, "There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home." Build it and they will come, Ken.

Don't get too excited, it won't play Half-Life. And can you imagine playing FPS games with only one mouse button?



THE 64-BIT QUESTION

So, what exactly is 64-bit? Why is it better than 32-bit? The answer lies with how computers deal with numbers. Rather than using a decimal system, electronic circuits use a binary 'switch' system with two symbols, on and off. Using a single binary number, or a 1-bit system, you can represent two numbers, 1 and 0. With a 2-bit system, using two binary numbers, you can represent up to four. An 8-bit system yields 256, 16-bit gives 65,536, and so on. 32-bit computers can handle 4.3 billion numbers, translating to 4GB of addressable memory; 32-bit operating systems can deal with 2GB RAM. In essence, 64-bit means bigger. Given time, you'll be able to load entire games into memory for near instantaneous access to huge levels and intricate textures.

For today's games, even for *Doom III* and *Half-Life 2*, more bits means bugger all. But the future is far more exciting (when is it not?). Tim Sweeney, Founder of Epic Games explains: "We're going to ship the 64-bit version of *UT2003* at or before the Athlon 64 launch. And our next-generation engine won't just support 64-bit, but will basically require it on the content-authoring side." He continues, "If there aren't widespread, consumer-priced 64-bit machines available in three years, we're going to have a hard time developing games that are more compelling than last year's games."

OK, NOW WHAT ABOUT THAT MAC?

The second reason there's a Mac on the page is because it's the world's fastest home computer. Let's be honest, that's quite an impressive claim. Every gamer – yes, you included – is an out and out speed freak, because more speed means everything you play looks and feels better. With dual 1GHz front-size buses and dual 2GHz PowerPC processors, Apple's own testing has shown that their baby is close to twice as fast as a 3GHz Pentium 4. So if you thought your big, brash, hyper-threaded three-litre was the fastest thing on little rubber feet, think again.

Don't get me wrong here. Such comparisons aren't meant to disparage you, or to kick start an argument about Apples. On the contrary, the Macintosh has only just caught up with the PC, and the PC is guaranteed to hit back. Forget the damned Mac and instead think excitedly about what's going to happen to the PC later this year: if you

were reading last month, you already know what Intel has planned for the Pentium, and now you know where AMD are going with their 64-bit architecture. All this power can only mean one thing – that games will get smoother, better, and even closer to reality.





REVIEWSThree new graphics cards



DEAR WANDYGot a problem you can't fix?



WATCHDOG Rogue traders beware

WEB

RELEASED SIZE



BUYER'S GUIDE
The best kit, the lowest prices

DRIVER WATCH

MOTHERBOARD

MANUFACTURER NAME

Make a date with your next driver

THE BIGGEST MOVE this month is ATI's CATALYST driver set for Radeon based video cards, which sneaks up a notch to version 3.5. As well as fixing a number of oddball issues with games, the upgraded drivers no longer have shader optimisations for 3DMark03 in response to the previous month's brouhaha about benchmark cheating. We also see VIA's Hyperion 4in1 drivers move to v4.48, and the addition of nForce2 drivers for NVIDIA's increasingly popular chipset. Apart from these, all is quiet on the driver front.

Intel	INF Update	5.0	14-Mar-03	1.38MB	support.intel.com
NVIDIA	nForce	2.03	30-Jan-03	29.5MB	www.nvidia.com
SIS	AGP	1.1.6a	02-Jun-03	5.3MB	download.sis.com
VIA	Hyperion	4.48	24-Jun-03	1.4MB	www.viaarena.com
GRAPHICS					
MANUFACTURER	NAME	DESC	RELEASED	SIZE	WEB
ATI	CATALYST	6.14.10.6360	23-Jun-03	6.6MB	www.ati.com
	Control Panels	6.14.10.5014	23-Jun-03	4.95MB	www.ati.com
NVIDIA	Detonator FX	44.03	14-May-03	18.8MB	www.nvidia.com
Matrox	Parhelia	1.04.01.003	05-May-03	8.68MB	www.matrox.com
SOUND					
MANUFACTURER	NAME	DESC	RELEASED	SIZE	WEB
Creative	Audigy 2 WDM Drivers	DriverPack 3	09-May-03	6.88MB	uk.europe.creative.com
	Audigy EAX ADVANCED HD Perf	Beta	07-May-03	13.96MB	uk.europe.creative.com
	SRINAL	AC3 fix	03-Jun-03	2.12MB	uk.europe.creative.com

DESC

WATCH THIS SPACE

The MEMIX memory watch looks like a gimmick but makes a lot of sense

EVER WANTED TO take a larger-than-floppy file home with you, but weren't sure how to go about it? Yup, common dilemma. You could burn a one-off CD, but that assumes the presence of a blank disk and a burner – it's also time consuming and wasteful. You could email the stuff to yourself, but that's often not practical – large attachments tend to 'bounce back' or push the recipient well over their quota.

INSTANT WRIST ACTION

The answer's easy if you're wearing a MEMIX watch. Pull back the strap, flick out and push in the USB connector, load up with 128MB of movies, music, game patches, demos, pictures, or whatever takes your fancy, and you're off – it's plug and play, ten times quicker than a CD or a floppy, and there's no need to format it beforehand. You can even boot from it. USB mass storage devices – flash drives, pen drives, call them what you want – are nothing

new. An increasing number of people are using them as a means of copying data between two machines and across platforms, and as an increasing number of users are finding out, they're small and easily lost. The beauty of the MEMIX is that you wear it, won't lose it, and it's also a clock – not the most stylish timepiece on the planet, but not ugly either.

To sum up, if you've ever had to copy files from one PC to another without the aid of a network, and need to know what time of day it is, a watch like this makes a great deal of sense.

"It's plug and play and ten times quicker than a CD or a floppy"



SNIPPETS

QUIETLY DOES IT

Anyone with a banging CPU and video card will know just how punishing their hardware can be on the ears. Quietpc.com have recently introduced an all-in-one 'Hush Kit' for AMD and Pentium III machines, the



box including an ultra-quiet 300W PSU, SilentDrive HDD enclosure, ultra-quiet CPU cooler, Zalman variable fan speed controller and silent motherboard heat sink. The £109 package represents a 15 per cent saving over buying the components separately. Visit www.quietpc.com for more details.

SK8R BOY

The Sony Ericsson T130 is a neat phone and includes a scaled-down version of Tony Hawk's Pro Skater, one of our favourite games. Alas, the title doesn't translate into miniature too well. The basic concept remains. and once you've learned the ropes the fun level shoots up, but I found myself playing the infinitely more relaxing miniature golf game instead. More at www.sonyericsson.com. By the way, owners of Nokia 7650 phones should download Taito's Space Invaders to see just how

ULTRA GYRO

close a conversion can get.

Despite sounding like a nutty idea, the Gyration Ultra has been picking up an astounding number of awards and is being heralded as somewhat revolutionary. It's the world's first 'air mouse', allowing you to point and shoot with the cursor without actually touching the desk. The ultimate in spatial freedom is the marketing gist, but given that you still have to sit down

to see the screen or use the keyboard, I remain unconvinced. Still, I'm fascinated that so many people love it, so look out for a review soon. In the meantime, www.gyration.com.

SIDEWIND NO MORE

Microsoft is reportedly discontinuing its SideWinder range of gaming peripherals. It will sadly cease to manufacture our Editor's Choice joystick, along with all the wheels, pads, and other products within the brand. Stores will continue to offer the range while they have stock. The decision comes after a decline in sales, with gamers preferring the combination of keyboard and mouse. I must confess, I haven't used a joystick since chucking my old Commodore Amiga in the loft.

MSI FX 5900-TD128

■ Price: £299 | Manufacturer: MSI | Phone: 020 8813 6688 | www.msicomputer.co.uk

It's priced to match the 9800 Pro. But can it beat the ATI kingpin?

NO DOUBT about it, the MSI card is a work of art - a wide tablet of copper, fashioned into elegant ridges and swirls. sandwiches the board on both sides. And like the 3D Blaster 5 reviewed below, it's unnaturally guiet - your PSU and hard drive are likely to be more vociferous.

Unlike the 256Mb Ultra, the vanilla version is set at a 400MHz core frequency and has 128Mb of DDR memory. Non-

180

160

140

120 100

80

60

40

FRAMES PER SECOND

MSI FX 5900 3.06GHZ PENTIUM 4 HT / WINDOWS XP, 1GB RAM

Ultra models normally use an 800MHz memory frequency (ie 400MHz DDR) rather than the 850MHz here - I guess this is MSI playing with the throttle, because as the performance chart shows the card is more than capable of taking the heat. Clocked up, it can be made to match the impressive performance of the Ultra in some benchmarks.

16

10

8

TWEAKED 453MHz core / 948MHz mem

CONCLUSION

Standard or tweaked, the 5900 performs brilliantly at everyday resolutions. By that I mean if you use it to run the games you

play now at 1024x768, the results are smoother than glass. In action games, high-polygon areas that would cause a lesser graphics engine to stall are dismissed with ease. The downside is that, when you crank up the quality and pixel count, it becomes somewhat

Radeon the same price and getting cheaper by the hour, why would you want this GeForce? If MSI stripped their card of its monolithic box. lost the 10 games, 20 utilities and Adobe Photoshop, and dropped the price by £50, it'd be a best buy winner.

PCZONE VERDICT

GRAPHICS CARD

- Can run the Ultra close in many tests
- Cool, quiet, and beautiful with it X Not as all-out ballsy as the bigger FX
- ✗ Excessive retail packaging

A great card. If only it were cheaper

3D BLASTER 5 FX5900 ULTRA

relative or 9800 Pro. It's then that

asthmatic next to its Ultra

you have to ask with the

■ Price: £399 | Manufacturer: Creative Labs | Phone: 00 353 1 8205052 | europe.creative.com

Wandy has his socks and his wallet blown clean off

UNLIKE its predecessor, the new Ultra is as quiet as a kitten's purr. It's still on the ungainly side, straddling the AGP and first PCI slots, but it's gloriously composed when stressed. 256MB DDR RAM, a 450MHz core and 256-bit memory bus - twice the width of the model it replaces - coupled with improved rendering technologies make the new FX 5900 Ultra the most gutsy graphics engine I've seen.

Creative's retail packaging is on the lean side, but what you get in return is a more realistic price tag. Performance remains excellent at any resolution and in any game, and the higher the quality, the more you appreciate the Blaster's stamina. What disappointed me was the card's aversion to overclocking -

compared with the

GRAPHICS CARD

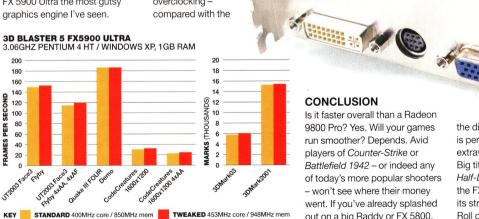
non-Ultra MSI 5900, which was delighted to run 13 per cent boost, the Creative Ultra complained at anything above 6 per cent.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Quickest card we've tested
- Unnerringly quiet X Top banana ATI cards available
- for £100 less
- X Overclockers will be disappointed

When the going gets tough, the Blaster really gets going

3D BLASTER 5 FX5900 ULTRA 3.06GHZ PENTIUM 4 HT / WINDOWS XP, 1GB RAM



CONCLUSION

Is it faster overall than a Radeon 9800 Pro? Yes. Will your games run smoother? Depends. Avid players of Counter-Strike or Battlefield 1942 - or indeed any of today's more popular shooters - won't see where their money went. If you've already splashed out on a big Raddy or FX 5800,

the difference is perceptible only on extravagant detail settings. Big titles like Doom III and Half-Life 2 will of course make the FX shine, but until then its strengths remain hidden. Roll on September.

3D PROPHET 9600 PRO

■ Price: £199 | Manufacturer: Hercules | Phone: 0208 665 1881 | europe.hercules.com

A middleweight card that's heavy on value

JUMPING into the slot of the 9500 Pro was never going to be easy, but the 9600 Pro can hold its heat-sink high. Day to day gaming with the card reveals it to be a visual dead-ringer for the 9700, and with some gentle tweaking, the Hercules can be made to perform decently on higher quality settings. It's no match for the 5900 or 9800, and in most cases the old 9500

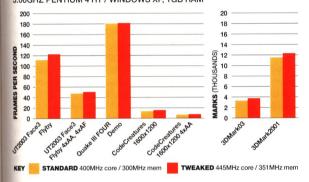
shades it, but at this price the levels of performance exceed expectations.

The 9600 uses the same RV350 core components as found in the 9800, but unlike its predecessor, which was essentially an inhibited 9700, the ATI newcomer has half the muscle - four pipelines rather than eight. Despite revving higher, such a big

difference becomes obvious when rendering demanding scenes. Snap up those 9500 Pros while they're still on the shelves!

GRAPHICS CARD

3D PROPHET 9600 PRO 3,06GHZ PENTIUM 4 HT / WINDOWS XP, 1GB RAM



At the risk of turning this section of the magazine into an ATI love-in, the 9600 Pro is a great card at a great price. It's not the amazing deal the outgoing 9500 Pro is, but it matches its FX counterpart in most benchmarks, and has the advantage of superior image quality. The only reservation is the suggested retail price - shop online and you can pick up a

Sapphire or Connect3D brand for £140, and stock clearance 9500 Pros may be even cheaper. The cool blue lighting on the Hercules is perfect for case modders, but when the engine block is identical to that used in cheaper cards, think hard before paying the premium.

PCZONE VERDICT

- Great pace for its price range
- Build quality and retail packaging Other 9600 Pro variants cheaper
- X Not as good as a 9500 Pro

ATI still the champ in this sector

MI USB DRI

Price: £45 | Manufacturer: PMI | Phone: 00 886 2 82263553 | www.pmimemory.com.tw

256MB of portable drive space in something the size of a biro

USB mass storage devices commonly referred to as 'pen drives' because of their shape, size and lid - have been around for ages but have only recently managed to shed their geek gadget status. If you're using Windows Me, 2000 or XP, modern devices will slot straight into a USB port like a farmer into a cow, and will appear on your desktop within seconds. No messing with drivers, no reading of manuals,

just an instant new drive letter. The PMI pen reviewed here weighs the same as a fart and you'd simply not know you had the equivalent of 175 floppies bouncing about in your pocket. 64MB, 128MB and 512MB variants are available

CONCLUSION

Yes, you could burn a one-off CD but that's wasteful. Yes, you could email the stuff to yourself but that's often not practical.

REMOVABLE DRIVE

Pull off the lid, slot in the pen, load up with movies, music, game patches, demos, pictures, or whatever takes your fancy it's ten times quicker than a CD or a floppy and there's no need to format it beforehand. So if you've ever copied files from one PC to another without the aid of a network. a pen drive is no money and plenty

"You'd simply not know you had the equivalent of 175 floppies bouncing about in your pocket"

ANOTHER ANGLE

All that said, but we can't say goodbye to floppy discs yet. It's the one thing that's common to every PC on the planet and the one thing that'll save your butt when your hard drive's on the fritz. OK, so modern motherboards will boot from these 'pen drive' thingamabobs, and I'd wager that USB devices will eventually replace the dear diskette, but it ain't going to happen for a long while yet. Who orders a new PC without a floppy?

PCZONE VERDICT Fast and simple

- Inexpensive
- ✓ Supplied with 36in USB extender cable
- X Will make you greedy for the 512MB one

At this price, everyone should have one



DEAR WANDY

A problem aired is a problem repaired. So don't be bashful, tell Wandy your troubles and he'll be certain to help you out

■ MERLIN ENGINE: Phil Wand

LET IT ALL OUT

Share your techie or gaming-related problems with us, and we, in turn, may well share them with thousands of readers via these very pages in a big communal love-in-type thing.

Write to Dear Wandy, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD

Email Address your letters to us at wandy@dearwandy.com with the subject heading 'Dear Wandy'. Please note: while we can assure you that we read absolutely every techie query sent to us, we are unable to offer personal replies. Sorry.

Wandy's new email address: wandy@dearwandy.com



NO PRO WOE

I recently purchased a Mesh Elite 2.8GHz XTRA to replace my ageing 1.4GHz Athlon. Being a subscriber, I quickly became aware of the 3DMark software and have been using the 2001SE version for some time. I settled on this system because of the excellent performance that the Radeon gave in your benchmarks (the Mesh system includes 512Mb PC2700 RAM and a 128Mb ATI Radeon 9700 Pro). I'm running Windows XP Home Edition SP1 and DirectX 9.0a with all the very latest drivers. Now, I've tried all sorts of combinations with performance versus quality, but they don't have any noticeable impact on my score - between 10,000 and 12.000 in 3DMark2001 and 1200 in 3DMark2003. In 3DMark2001 I run the tests at 1024x768x32 with no AA and no AF. Even with AA and AF on in your tests, my benchmarks are 4,000 points lower! A couple of hundred points adrift would be tolerable, but after spending £1,500 such a large difference is unacceptable. After consulting forums and back issues of ZONE I've become aware of SIS and VIA AGP drivers - neither of which I have installed - but I would be grateful to know if I need them as that may explain the poor performance? I also came across a forum thread where it was stated that updating the

graphics card BIOS would help,

but I have not seen any for download and would be grateful to know if and where they are available. I would appreciate a detailed response of what I need to do. Alas, I find that a lot of forums assume too much, and therefore do not always provide that missing bit of vital information.

lain

Like an increasing number of people who write in, you included an exhaustive spec sheet with information on all the clobber that comprises your PC. I'm glad you did, because it made something startlingly obvious: the Radeon 9700 Pro you believe you have isn't actually a 9700 Pro at all. The specs highlighted a memory clock speed of 270MHz and a core

clock speed of 275MHz, making your card either a plain vanilla 9700 or a 9500 Pro - a card that should turn in a score of around 11,000 in 3DMark2001 and around 3,500 in 3DMark2003. Your score of 1 200 in the latter test is on the low side but I wouldn't take this to heart. Numbers can be pumped by a clean boot and by disabling any background tasks and services you have running - I noted from the spec sheet that you could afford to lose a few processes in Windows Task Manager, so make sure there's nothing in the system tray. Your CPU should be at idle, anti-virus programs shut down, network connections disabled (no, not just unplugged), and your system freshly booted when you start the test. I'd also change the AGP Aperture Size in your BIOS both up and down to see if that makes a difference. I do realise that chalking up half the expected score in a prominent benchmark is rather disheartening, not to mention a little odd, so perhaps you'd like to pop in at www.dearwandy.com to let me know how you get on? As for flashing the BIOS of your card, ATI don't make their

BIOS updates public, and even if they did I'm not convinced that such measures would help. On the subject of your motherboard, your PC includes a P4G8X Asus motherboard which uses the Granite Bay (ie Intel E7205) chipset and, as such, you should ignore any references to VIA and SiS drivers. Not that they'd install.

DIRECT EX

Correct me if I'm wrong, but isn't DirectX made by Microsoft? I thought I'd try the Will Rock demo from the DVD on issue 130. I ran the installer. and was prompted to install DirectX 9 - the game insisted on it. The installation continued and I then received a message saying that the software 'hadn't passed Windows Logo Testing' to verify its compatibility with XP. I've looked through Microsoft's site for help but none was offered online. I've tried reinstalling my current version of DirectX 8 but to no avail. I'd really like to sort this problem out as I was intending to buy one of the new DirectX 9 video cards. Can you help?

Anon
A bunch of people are
running into this problem
and there are a bunch of

Services | Action View Help Services (Local) Description Status Startup Type | Log On As Cruptographic Services Notifies sel.. Provides s... Local Service Application Layer Gatewa Application Management Provides s... Manual Local System Automatic Updates Local System Background Intelligent Tr. Uses idle n... Manual Local System ClipBook Enables Cli. Local System COM+ Event System Supports 5... Local System Manages t... Maintains a. Manual Local System Computer Browser DHCP Client Distributed Link Tracking Automatic Local System Manual Automatic Network S. Distributed Transaction C Network 5.. DNS Client Local System Automatic Extended Standard All Tasks Start service Cryptographic Services on Local Compute Refresh Making sure XP's Cryptographic Services are running.

"Correct me if I'm wrong, but isn't DirectX made by Microsoft?"

"Nobody told me the MX440SE was a piece of crap, and was actually worse than a GeForce3"

possible answers - the most likely being that you have inadvertently disabled your PC's Cryptographic Services. This runs silently in the background, checking the digital signature on any stuff you install, and in the case of DirectX 9 it'll trigger the weird error message you outlined in your message if you don't have it running. Click the Start button and select Run. Type services.msc into the box and hit enter. Scroll down to the Cryptographic Services entry. ensure it's started (right-click on it and choose the relevant option if not), and then try the recalcitrant DirectX installer again. If this doesn't do the trick, you should use the System File Checker utility to whip through all the vital files on your system and make sure that they're all present and correct. Again, hit the Start button and choose Run. Now, open a DOS box by typing cmd. At the prompt, type sfc/purgecache and hit return. In the same window, type sfc/scannow and wait for the process to complete. If this doesn't do the trick, you'll need to run the Windows installer from your original Microsoft CD and choose repair when given the option.

PAUSE NO MORE

With regard to the problem Mike Peters had a few issues back. I had the same problem as many of my online friends: XP on the 'go-slow'. Mike mentioned that he was bang up to date with his updates, which made me think. And here's the solution! There's a bug with one of the Windows updates, namely Q811493. The patch is supposed to fix a hole in Windows Messaging but can end up causing a severe performance degradation. To remove the patch, click the Start button, then open the Add/Remove Programs from

with Control Panel. Scroll down to Windows XP Hotfix (SP2) Q811493, click the Remove button and reboot when prompted. Since doing this fix windows has speeded up again and now runs fine. Hope this helps Mike Peters!

Joseph Craven

Three letters this month on the Peters slowdown problem, all mentioning Microsoft's so-called hotfix Q811493. A big thank you to Joseph, Mike Reid and Richard White for taking the time to write in. Proof that not everyone uses these pages as little more than a distraction while answering a call of nature.

SWAP SHOP

I've just bought a lovely new computer from PC World. And after using a 233MHz for about four years, I expected to be blown away by my 3.06HT. It even has a nice 128MB GeForce4 card slotted inside. Great! I hear you say. But the thing is, nobody told me the MX440SE was a piece of crap, and was actually worse than a GeForce3. So what am I to do? Can I get PC World to change it or am I stuck with it? Any suggestions would be a great help.

Scott Williamson

I'm not sure I'd describe a 128Mb MX440SE as a "piece of crap", but at the same time I do concur that it's hardly a "piece of lovely" either. And you know what? In all the years I've been writing this column, I don't recall explaining exactly how you'd go about getting shot of it. Sure, I've hinted at what to look for, how much to spend and so on, but I've never given a step-by-step guide on how to scrape out the do-do and slot in the go-go. So to answer your question, no. you can't take the system back on the strength of a

muscled replacement and use that instead - and here's the Wandy tried and tested method (I've assumed you have Windows XP, as your system is new). First, download the latest drivers for your new card from the manufacturer's website and put the installer on your desktop. Next, right-click on the desktop and choose **Properties. Open the Settings** tab and hit Advanced. Open the Adapter tab, click Properties, then choose the Driver tab and hit Uninstall. Restart when requested. After rebooting, open the Add/Remove Programs control panel and uninstall all the drivers for your current card - in this case, they'll be prefixed with the word NVIDIA. When asked if you wish to restart, decline the offer and shutdown the system instead. Leaving the 240V cable plugged in, but the mains socket in the 'off' position, remove the lid to your case. Remove the screw securing your card to the backplane but DO NOT start vanking it out - an AGP card is secured to its slot by means of a small plastic clip, the design of which will vary from motherboard to motherboard. Using your fingers and NOT a screwdriver, unclip the card from its base and then draw the whole slab upwards making sure to keep it all parallel to the case. Unpack your new card, push it firmly into the AGP slot (it should make a satisfying 'click') and then screw it to the backplane. Replace the case and power her up! On arriving at your desktop, cancel any plug and play dialogs that appear and instead run the installer you downloaded. Follow the prompts and you're done.

duff video card, but you can

go buy yourself a more

WANDY'S TOP TIP

APPLESOFT MACINDOWS



Thom Shannon's AppleKeys 2 makes the Apple Pro Keyboard fully functional when hooked up to a PC.

When my second wireless keyboard died, I decided to take PC ZONE's advice and get an Apple Pro Keyboard - the white pretty one. It works perfectly, but you do need an operating system with full USB support. If you have Windows 98SE or above but it still won't play ball, look in the BIOS and ensure the USB keyboard is enabled. I've got to say, it's probably the best bunch of keys I've ever used, and if others

out there are full of Apple goodness and miss their Print Screen, Scroll Lock and Pause keys, here's a few utilities for you to get them back. The best, AppleKeys v2 from www.justthom.com/applekeys, fixes everything nicely and is the obvious choice. Kloader from www.klm.freeservers.com/loader can be made to perform the same trick but is more in-depth. Lalso found someone claiming that if you install Microsoft's IntelliType v4 software and state that your keyboard is a Natural Keyboard Pro, F13 is mapped to Print Screen - although I haven't tried this yet.

Wandy says: over the last few months I've had a number of letters from people explaining that they followed our advice, bought the Apple keyboard, but are now missing their Windows oriented keys (Print Screen being the most obvious example). So my thanks to Jonathan for saving me some time and providing worthwhile pointers, which solve the problem. £67.35 is on its way to you. less my £17.35 fee for correcting the typographical errors in your letter.

Send in your Top Tip to Dear Wandy and win yourself £50.

A REG TOO FAR

I was messing around with a free software program called RegCleaner. What I did was delete absolutely everything that looked useless, or software that no longer existed on my hard drive. Now I can't open my games or many other applications. I also can't perform many of the tasks and options in Control Panels such as Internet Options, And when I right click on programs, the Open option is missing from the menu. Please fix this problem Wandy. My system is 998MHz Windows 2000 NT with 254Mb RAM and 18.5Gb hard-drive and GeForce 4 Ti4200 64MB RAM graphics card. Jimmy

I'm sorry but I'm not in right now, but if you'd like to leave a message after the beep I'll get back to you as soon as I can. Seriously though, you've made a big boo-boo here. The registry is the very hub of Windows. If you delete stuff from it without being aware of the consequences of each action then something very bad will happen. In this case, your install of Windows is borked. Check that RegCleaner hasn't kept an automated backup of your registry before it went bent - restore it if so. You could also try rebooting your PC, hammering the F8 key until the Windows startup menu appears and then choosing Last Known Good Configuration from the options, but I don't have much faith that'll work. In my view. and assuming that RegCleaner didn't keep a backup, fixing what you've done requires a complete reinstall. Put simply, don't touch the registry unless you know what you're doing.

Visit Dear Wandy online at www.dearwandy.com



Research tools and utilities thoroughly before you use them. Use Google to see if other people have run into trouble while



WATCHDOG

Tempers flaring; fists clenching; recriminations flying thick and fast. Yes, it's that time of the month again. Welcome to consumer hell...

■ WRITING THE WRONGS Adam Phillips

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

Don't worry – we're here to help when you've reached the end of your tether. If you have a consumer issue that needs addressing then drop us a line.

WRITE TO Watchdog, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1T 4JD

EMAIL Alternatively, email us at **letters@pczone.co.uk** with the subject heading 'Watchdog'

READ ME!

If you are writing in to complain about a product, please supply us with your full name, address and **contact number**. With PCs, make sure that you also include all **purchasing details** such as reference and invoice numbers.

HELL HATH NO FURY...

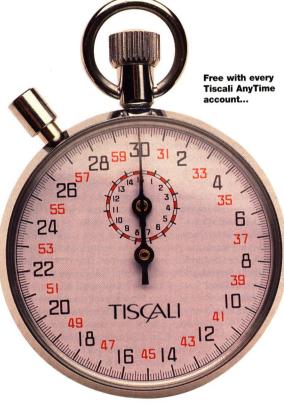
...like an Internet user scorned. Step forward Alan White and Anthony Webber, two fuming customers of Tiscali's AnyTime service. Let Alan White explain: "My ISP is threatening to cut me off at the end of the month as, according to them, I'm in breach of their terms and conditions, ie using the Internet more than 150 hours a month. As my son and I are serious online gamers, this really will be a blow to us until we get ADSL in our area."

Anthony Webber is suffering the same treatment and he's none to happy about Tiscali's use of the term 'AnyTime' either: "I'm not a lawyer but I have just learnt that Tiscali 'AnyTime' does not actually mean what one might imagine. 150 hours per month is not actually 'AnyTime,' is it? If we say that a month is 30 days, that means there are actually a whopping 720 hours in a month!"

So is Tiscali taking liberties with their service? Well, of course, it disagrees. Steve Horley, the ISP Director at Tiscali UK, explains: "We took pre-emptive action because the very high usage of a small percentage of customers had the potential to affect the rest. We had been monitoring this over three months and have identified a core of users who are treating the service as an 'Always On' service. AnyTime offers flexible any time use, but we have always been clear that it is not designed to be always on."

He continues: "Like other players in the market we have adopted 150 hours as a reasonable level, bearing in mind that the average AnyTime customer uses less than 50 hours per month. The customers affected were advised of their options – for example, those in broadband areas have been offered an upgrade to broadband at only another £5 per month, with a free modem."

With that surreptitious product plug over, all the



above means is simple – for punters without broadband access and who are 'repeat offenders' like Alan White, you're out in the cold. Well, at least you can still use your Tiscali email address, lads...

AMAZON-G DISGRACE!

Every gamer wants to be a reviewer. Even if it means getting sod all money for posting that sparkling prose online for all the world to read. Being a regular poster of reviews to the Amazon site, you can imagine Paul Boland's delight then when Amazon contacted him saying that he had won 50 quid for writing the first review of a particular product.

So Paul made his claim for the money within the week deadline as stipulated by the company: "The week came and went, and I heard nothing about my prize so I contacted Amazon again via their online form," explains Paul. "Nothing came back from them so I continued to contact them, both via their online form and via their email address. Three weeks and six

emails later, and not one single email has even been acknowledged! There's no sign of my money."

While many a freelance games journalist reading the above may be suffering from a sickly feeling of déjà vu, Watchdog decided to bypass the NUJ's legal department in this particular case and head straight for Amazon to find

out what had happened to Paul's pending 'payment'.

The company got back to us with the following: "We have looked into Mr Boland's complaint and it appears that there has been a delay in sending through the £50 gift certificate – we do take customer service extremely seriously, and we are looking into this matter to understand the reason for the delay."

They say they have written to you Paul to apologise for the delay and have forwarded you the £50 gift certificate as promised... without any interest for 'late payment'.

DOOMSDAY...

For all you hardcore Net gamers out there, how does this sound as a worst-case scenario: You've been told by BT that you will never have ADSL in your area, and that you'll be using a 56K modem for as long as you live in that area. You decide to make the best of it and have a second line installed exclusively for online gaming. And, once installed, you discover to your horror that you can only connect at a maximum of 28.8K.

Feeling queasy yet? Then imagine how poor reader Daniel Westall felt when he found himself in this position: "I phoned BT and explained that the line was unusable for what I wanted it for," recalls Daniel. "I found out after many calls that



For some, preferable to a 28.8K net connection...





SAINTS NOT SINNERS





THEY EXIST. THEY REALLY DO. COMPANIES THAT WANT TO MAKE YOUR CONSUMER LIFE A HAPPIER PLACE. GAWD BLESS 'EM...

We have featured a fair few complaints about NTL in the past but reader, Rico, wants to sing their praises for once: "When my sister moved house and wanted to be connected to broadband, I thought I would show off my limited computer knowledge and connect it using the NTL installation CD," he explains. "When I came to the PIN number part, I couldn't find the PIN number so I used my own and filled in my details thus rendering my own connection useless!"

Err, oops. So Rico phones NTL and they actually apologise to him, then talk him through how to sort the problem out on the phone. And then give him a month's connection free of charge. "Not bad, NTL!" reckons Rico. And we're inclined to agree...

they have split the line and have used a box on the telephone pole called DAX."

To cut through a lot of technical guff, BT decided that the best course of action was to disconnect the second line and go back to a single one. But, oh bugger, the original line is now running at a mere 28.8K as well.

Daniel reckons it must be the DAX box that's causing the problem and has even offered to pay to have it removed. But no luck there either. He's understandably desperate so he contacted us.

Well, there's only bad news, we're afraid. We sent in your complaint to the powers that be at BT and they have failed to respond with any kind of solution or apology. Perhaps they're busy splitting lines or in meetings to discuss the possibility of broadband in your area by 2020. But we doubt it. If they should decide to get back to us, we will of course print their response next month.

FREESERVE FOUL UP?

"What do you have to do to talk to a Freeserve 'technical adviser' who knows what he's talking about?" begins Pete Edwards's rant against the ISP. He's been having problems with his connection since he signed up with the company late last year.

"My connection randomly drops every 20 minutes to three hours or so," he says.
"30 per cent of the time, it will simply redial. The other time, I get the "Unable to Establish Connection" error, and it's a complete reboot. Not very nice in the middle of a MOH clan match!"

He was informed by Freeserve that it was an issue with his AMD motherboard and VIA chipset. So off Pete went and bought a bunch of new kit. And yep, you guessed it, he still had the same problem.

"So, I left it a few months to calm down and the latest thing is that now my pings have started going all over the place," fumes Pete. "Online FPSs are now impossible. On a UK server, when a game starts, my ping is at 40ms. When I see someone else, it goes to 100ms. When someone fires a gun near me, it goes up to 150ms, and when a few people are on screen, and there's a bit more action, it's in the 300s!"

Pete's tried everything but to no avail – he's still not getting the service he paid for: "My question is "What the hell am I paying Freeserve for then?'"

A good question and one we posed to Freeserve. The company says that its customer services team have spoken to you and BT have been round your gaff to investigate further. Freeserve says that the issue was traced to a broken filter and you are now connected. Let us know if you an still experiencing problems though...

"CARD REJECTED"

Is the following a world record for lousy customer service? Well, let's look at the evidence – let's say you'd bought a graphics card from Watford Electronics. It worked fine at first, then, come Christmas, it started locking up your machine. What to do? Well, from the sounds of it, you have to wait months to get the wretched problem sorted by Watford Electronics.

Reader Rob McConnell explains: "I requested a returns authorisation number for the faulty graphics card via their website on January 20 this year. I heard nothing and had to email repeatedly to finally gain authorisation for return on February 24. I sent back the faulty card on February 26."

After hearing nothing for more than a month, Rob emailed again to ask what was happening and was told on April 1 by a representative that "a replacement is leaving our warehouse today".

"As it turned out, this was not true," says Rob. "I waited for more than a week and (unsurprisingly) heard nothing, so I emailed again on April 10 asking for an update on the situation."

And the reply he received?
"Unfortunately, this card was
not dispatched as it has been
discontinued. I can advise that
we are awaiting stock from our
suppliers. However we can offer
you an alternative. Please advise
how you wish to proceed."

Because Rob couldn't quite understand how a company could be waiting for supplies of a discontinued product, he decided to go for the replacement. Before you, the reader, loses the will to live, we can summarise by saying that Rob has subsequently emailed, telephoned and considered smoke signals to get his hands on his replacement graphics card. But it's now been six months and Rob's had enough.

Over to Watchdog, then, who asked Watford for its opinion on the complete cock-up in customer care. "We have emailed Mr Connell today to apologise for the problems and have offered him a discount if he wishes to place any further orders," says a spokesperson for the company. "He was refunded in full by our returns department

on June 6 [six days before we Watchdog contacted Watford]."

Watford says, though, that it has assured you, Rob, "that this is not our usual practice to take so long. This problem was caused by a build-up of things – problems with the graphics card company; delays in returns; new staff not giving the correct advice, etc, and is not the usual way we do business, obviously, or

"What do you have to do to talk to a Freeserve 'technical adviser' who knows what he's talking about?"

PETE EDWARDS

A MAN WHOSE PATIENCE, IT SEEMS, HAS JUST RUN OUT

Watchdog would have had a lot more complaints about us."

In summing up, Watford says it is a shame this problem was not picked up on sooner as it could have been easily resolved. Hear! Hear! In the meantime, if any other readers have experienced similar problems with the company, please let us know...



Watford Electronics toilets: last known sighting of Rob's faulty graphics card before it mysteriously vanished...

UYER'S G

We've rewritten our guide to fit in a whole slew of new products and to make your buying decisions easi<mark>er</mark>

Gone are the three categories of old, and in their place are three new ones. Editor's Choice is the class champ, the product that will satisfy all of you no matter what

you play. Our Recommended product wears a silver medal, not quite as triumphant as the outright winner, but a very worthy second place. Finally, the Also

Consider product is one we believe you should look at before settling for one of the other two - it may just tickle your fancy. If you feel we've got something wrong, or

just want to add your tuppence ha'penny, mail letters@pczone.co.uk. If we act on your suggestion, we'll be certain to shower you with gifts.

MOTHERBOARD

EDITOR'S CHOICE



RECOMMENDED



ALSO CONSIDER



IS7 (INTEL)

STREET PRICE £80 MANUFACTURER ABIT Computer TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE www.abit.com.tw Huge performance coupled with a huge sigh

of relief from your wallet. Although the IS7 uses Intel's Springdale chipset, essentially a restricted version of its Canterwood sibling, Abit's motherboard supports P4 800/533/400MHz CPUs with Hyper-Threading, and up to 4GB of Dual DDR. It also features onboard LAN, 6-channel audio, and IEEE 1394 FireWire. Proof



K7N2 DELTA ILSR (ATHLON) STREET PRICE £90

MANUFACTURER MSI TELEPHONE 020 8813 6688 WEBSITE www.msi.com.tw

Featuring the nForce2 chipset with the FSB

wound up from 333MHz to 400MHz, the K7N2 Delta provides AMD die-hards with extra shove from a faster system bus and up to 3GB of Dual DDR memory. Although Barton-cored Athlons aren't a patch on their Hyper-Threaded opposite numbers, boards such as the K7N2 Delta close the gap. Other features include dual IEEE 1394 FireWire and automated BIOS undates.



875PNEO-FIS2R (INTEL)

STREET PRICE £150 MANUFACTURER MSI **TELEPHONE** 020 8813 6688 WEBSITE www.msi.com.tw A high-end P4 Canterwood board, the Neo

features some truly remarkable features, including dynamic overclocking - the hardware jumps on the throttle the moment you open applications - and automated BIOS updates using MSI's own Live Update software. Other features include IEEE 1394 FireWire, 6 channel audio, onboard LAN and support for Dual DDR. Build quality and overall packaging are excellent.



P4 3.0GHZ

STREET PRICE £340 MANUFACTURER Intel TELEPHONE 01793 403 000 WEBSITE www.intel.com

For an additional £160, you could order the

you don't need to spend over a ton for a top-rank motherboard.

three-litre chip's big brother, the 3.2GHz, but we don't think the extra thrust justifies the price hike. With Hyper-Threading enabled, the 3.0GHz Pentium delivers a jaw-pounding power hit from twin processors and an 800MHz front-side bus. With a decent motherboard and some fast memory, products such as this make Doom III and Half-Life 2 seem all the more plausible.



ATHLON XP 3000+ BARTON

STREET PRICE £190 MANUFACTURER AMD TELEPHONE N/A WEBSITE www.amd.com

Let's not forget who drove Intel into rolling out

key features such as Hyper-Threading. AMD's Athlon successfully shocked its Santa Clara rival into releasing technologies that were originally pencilled for the next Pentium. And although any 3.0GHz HT on paper makes the Barton look like a distant runner up, it remains a great chip at a great price. Paired with a decent video card, it's a high-quality solution



P4 2.4GHZ

STREET PRICE £145 MANUFACTURER Intel TELEPHONE 01793 403 000 WEBSITE www.intel.com

For little more than two hundred quid you can

have our Editor's Choice motherboard and a Hyper-Threading Pentium 4 chip running at 2.4GHz with 800MHz FSB. Drop in our favourite Radeon 9800 Pro video card, and instantly you have a balls-on machine that's ready and willing to tackle the next generation of gaming. If you're building a local games network and want big machines for small money, look no further.



WD1200JB 120GB

STREET PRICE £118 MANUFACTURER Western Digital TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE www.westerndigital.com Many of you will view a 120Gb HDD as an

extravagance, but with games getting longer and broadband getting wider, a hangar-like hard drive gives you plenty of room for mucking about. You'll also bring that never-ending quest for more room to an abrupt end. The price is just right, and the performance second to none. Like the DiamondMax Plus9, the WD1200JB features an 8Mb cache and a speed of 7200RPM.



DIAMONDMAX PLUS9 80GB

STREET PRICE £69 MANUFACTURER Maxtor TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE www.maxtor.com

The mid-sized Maxtor is a drive for everyone:

it's large, fast, and not that expensive. Most users will find 80Gb more than adequate for their work, play, and downloading requirements, and those greedy for more gig can jump a size up. The Fast ATA, 7200RPM drive includes Maxtor's Shock Protection System and Quiet Drive Technology, but if you want the Serial ATA version, expect a £20 premium.

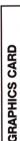


RAPTOR 36GB

STREET PRICE £117 MANUFACTURER Western Digital TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE www.westerndigital.com If you don't need a deep hole for your data,

or if you intend keeping your dirt on a separate drive, the 10.000RPM, Serial ATA Raptor makes the ideal foundation for your primary partition. It's wickedly fast, perhaps the fastest HDD available yet, and although designed for server environments, provides gaming desktops with the kind of warp-nine, low access times that make any application more nimble.



HDD

128MB RADEON 9800 PRO

STREET PRICE £286 MANUFACTURER Crucial TELEPHONE 0800 013 0330 WEBSITE www.crucial.com/UK

Being put in the shade by an FX 5900 Ultra

doesn't make the 9800 Pro any less of a nutcase. With 128MB of quad-channel DDR memory, a 380MHz core clock, full DirectX9 compliance and AGP8X, the 128MB Raddy usurps every rival bar the baddest NVIDIA card. And at this price, Crucial's kit is shockingly good value. Anyone wishing to turbocharge their gaming need look no further.



3D BLASTER FX5900 ULTRA

STREET PRICE £399 MANUFACTURER Creative Labs TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

How could we not praise the world's craziest video card? The 256MB 5900 Ultra is hugely wide, eerily quiet,

and unbelievably, hauntingly smooth at big resolutions. If you want your games to ooze an hydraulic efficiency, and have some serious dosh to throw at it, look no further. NVIDIA's high revving, low noise NV35 is everything the 5800 Ultra should have been. The one downside is the price.



EXCALIBUR RADEON 9000 PRO

STREET PRICE £83 MANUFACTURER HiTech TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE www.hitech.com.hk

Our Best Budget buy for some months now, the Excalibur from ATI partner HiTech is plenty card for little cash. At under £85, you get a 64MB, 275MHz DDR Radeon that's easily the best value card in its sector - drop one of these diminutive fellows into an old donkey and suddenly a whole raft of hungry titles including UT 2003 or Battlefield 1942 become a reality.



SOUND

AUDIGY 2

STREET PRICE £86 MANUFACTURER Creative Labs TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com A quantum leap from its predecessor, the

Audigy 2 offers a boggling range of features, including 6.1 surround sound, EAX Advanced HD, Advanced Resolution DVD-Audio and 24-bit/96kHz recording, and was the first card to gain THX certification from LucasFilm. If you appreciate the immersive experience offered by high fidelity, surround sound, the Audigy will give you an experience like no other.



GAMESURROUND FORTISSIMO III 7.1

STREET PRICE £36 **MANUFACTURER** Hercules **TELEPHONE** 020 8665 1881 WEBSITE europe.hercules.com

For less than the price of many games, the Fortissimo III provides support for 5.1, 6.1 and 7.1 speaker sets - the latter giving every Dolby EX title an added dimension from yet more speakers. Two front, two back, two middle, a centre and a sub, not to mention a separate output for headphones, will make any compatible game come alive.



AUDIGY 2 PLATINUM EX

STREET PRICE £160 MANUFACTURER Creative Labs TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com Offering the same core features as its little

brother, the Platinum Ex performs and sounds like no other card. The external breakout box is a boon for anyone serious about their listening, and includes standard audio connections and volume controls. The big Platinum also offers dual SB1394 FireWire ports and optical links, a stereo RCA input, plus MIDI In and MIDI Out mini-DIN sockets for the music maker.



World's Most Powerful VGA ever...

JOYSTICK

PLAYER

Worldwide No.1 VGA Card Manufacturer

EDITOR'S CHOICE



RECOMMENDED

ALSO CONSIDER





MX500 STREET PRICE £34 MANUFACTURER Logitech TELEPHONE 020 7309 0127 WEBSITE www.logitech.com

Although it comes with a tail and doesn't have the same substantive feeling as the battery-reliant MX700, the MX500 remains a solid product and a solid performer in all games. It features Logitech's MX optical engine, mouse wheel (plus two additional buttons either side to aide document navigation), a task-switcher button, and two thumb buttons that speed up web navigation.



OPTICAL MOUSE BLUE STREET PRICE £28 MANUFACTURER Microsoft TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100

WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/uk If you've ever been boggled by the number of

buttons on a modern mouse, and have fond memories of a time when three clickers and a wheel was all anyone needed, Microsoft's cool blue rodent is the perfect pointing peripheral. It's nice to look at, nice to hold, and as any veteran FPS gamer will tell you, three buttons really is all you need. And the latest optical technology means it works anywhere and won't lag.



MX700 STREET PRICE £53

MANUFACTURER ACTURER Logitech TELEPHONE 020 7309 0127 WEBSITE www.logitech.com

Sporting the MX optical engine that made Logitech famous with gamers, the MX700 is essentially an MX500 with its tail lopped off. A cradle not only keeps your desk tidy but also acts as a recharger for the unfettered rodent making the mouse a whole lot more attractive to people who can't be bothered with batteries. It's a touch pricey, and we remain unconvinced that going cordless is worth the extra.



INTERNET NAVIGATOR

STREET PRICE £21 MANUFACTURER Logitech TELEPHONE 020 7309 0127 WEBSITE www.logitech.com The Internet Navigator lies absolutely flat on

your desk, a trademark Logitech design that makes it look sleeker and 'feel' nicer. There's a scroll wheel along the left edge and a raft of customisable function keys to make trawling the web a cinch - you no longer have to swap back and forth to the mouse, and instead can leave your hands over on the keyboard. Once you browse this way, there's no going back.



OFFICE KEYBOARD

STREET PRICE 928 MANUFACTURER Microsoft **TELEPHONE** 0870 601 0100 WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/uk Forget what you've learned about Microsoft

software - their hardware is always of an exceedingly high build quality and, despite problems with early Intellimouse rodents, extremely durable. Shortcut buttons you think you'll never use soon become second nature, especially when reconfigured to suit your way of working, and once you learn the enhanced layout you'll never go back to tapping on anything else.



PRO KEYBOARD STREET PRICE £50 MANUFACTURER Apple

TELEPHONE 0800 039 1010 WEBSITE www.apple.com/uk

If you think we're mad for including an Apple

keyboard, think again. Anyone looking for a Rolls-Royce keyboard, and who can live without all the additional buttons, scroll wheels and assorted paraphernalia, need look no further. The Apple Pro plugs straight into your USB port and with the help of third party utilities disguises the fact that it was designed for computer illiterates with fewer than two mouse buttons.



SIDEWINDER FORCE FEEDBACK 2

STREET PRICE 252 MANUFACTURER Microsoft TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100 WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/uk

Everyone who uses the Sidewinder ends up loving it. As suggested by its name, the Microsoft stick features force feedback - as well as a rotating handle, an auto-cannon button, throttle lever, and a fully programmable eight-way switch array on the top of the nob. Top notch build and a decent size base make it the choice of virtual pilots everywhere.



CYBORG 3D GOLD

STREET PRICE £23 MANUFACTURER Saitek TELEPHONE 01454 451 900 WEBSITE www.saitek.co.uk A former Best Buy, the Saitek stick is

renowned for the way it can be taken apart and put back together to fit your hand perfectly, and also for its ambidextrous nature - lefties as well as righties can get to grips with it. It features seven fire buttons, and like the Sidewinder has eight hat buttons, a lever throttle, and a twist grip for controlling the rudder. At this price you'd be daft not to.



HOTAS COUGAR

STREET PRICE 9249 MANUFACTURER Thrustmaster TELEPHONE 020 8665 1881 WEBSITE www.thrustmaster.co.uk

The John Holmes of joysticks. Based on the flight controls of an F-16, sturdy metal construction makes it feel like no other peripheral. With 28 customisable buttons, 18lbs of resistance built into its springs, programmable hat switches and an adaptive action for the separate throttle arm, it transforms any flight simulation and is the ultimate toy for wannabe pilots. It's ten



INSPIRE 5.1 5300

STREET PRICE £50 MANUFACTURER Creative Labs TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com The Inspire furnishes you with five satellite

speakers, a sub and a wired remote control. All are sleek looking, solid feeling and great sounding. The bass is clean, the middle and treble crisp, and although power output doesn't climb into three digits, the amp provides more than enough oomph. Added to which, there's support for enhanced 5.1 surround sound on EAX titles. The only downside is that there's no headphone jack



Z-640 STREET PRICE 960 MANUFACTURER Logitech **TELEPHONE** 020 7309 0127

WEBSITE www.logitech.com Logitech have patented the pressure-driver

design of their subwoofer and we can hear the difference. For the money, the clout is simply amazing - bassheads among you will love it. Higher frequencies don't disappoint either, the 5.1 sounding almost as clean and inviting as the Inspire 5300s. Unlike the Creative set, the Z-640 has a headphone socket, but its not conveniently sited. Shame.



MEGAWORKS THX 5.1 550 STREET PRICE \$235

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com Successor to our Best Performance winner,

the Megaworks 550 is a pretty stunning 5.1 setup featuring five 70W capsule-shielded satellite speakers, a 150W wood subwoofer, and a wired remote with a separate headphone socket. Built to THX standards the sound quality is superb in both DVDs and games - Creative's BASH system providing 500W of burst power that'll make you leap out of your seat.

times the cost of a regular joystick but is in a class of its own.



CML175SXW

STREET PRICE £335 MANUFACTURER Hitachi TELEPHONE N/A WEBSITE www.hitachidigitalmedia.com When it comes to flat-panel, fast-paced

gaming, response times really count. And the CML175SXW has the lowest response time in its sector - a mere 12ms, or about half that of most rivals. It also delivers a good, clean image, and is nicely priced. If you're looking to make the move to CRT, and games are a priority for you, this skinny little Hitachi is the obvious choice.



MULTISYNC LCD1760NX

STREET PRICE £380 MANUFACTURER NEC Mitsubishi TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE www.nec-mitsubishi.com Amazing build quality, bright and clear image,

radiant colours, height-adjustable stand, low 16ms response time, and all for a very reasonable price. Products like the NEC LCD1760NX sound a death knell for old-fashioned phosphor. Not only do they now come close to matching the visual performance of a CRT screen, they're affordable, elegantly designed, and take up hardly any desk space.



VISIONMASTER PRO 514

STREET PRICE £490 MANUFACTURER liyama **TELEPHONE** 01438 745 482 WEBSITE www.iiyama.co.uk Boasting a 22-inch Mitsubishi Electric

DIAMONDTRON tube, 0.24 mm AG pitch and flicker-free refresh

rates at immense resolutions, the liyama is a truly breathtaking sight on your desktop - not least because it gobbles so much of it. The big VM also features a typically comprehensive on-screen menu, USB hub and audio connectors. At 1600x1200, the display is rock steady at 110Hz and is ideal partner for gaming.



APPI F iPod STREET PRICE £419

MANUFACTURER Apple **TELEPHONE** 020 8210 1000 WEBSITE www.apple.com/uk There are loads of MP3 players on the market

but everybody wants an iPod and the new version is even smaller (in size) yet even bigger (in capacity). It weighs less than two CDs and can store up to 7500 tracks, and as a bonus the supplied headphones are top notch as well. The speedy Firewire interface (you'll need a suitable connection) and remote control rounds off a totally class act.



ARCHOS JUKEBOX MULTIMEDIA

STREET PRICE £330 MANUFACTURER Archos TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE www.archos.com

While it may never win any awards for aesthetics, the Jukebox Multimedia from Archos is the Swiss Army knife of media players. Handling one of the widest selections of file types the player can even play back a selection of video formats including DIVX. The sound is fantastic but the bundled headphones are shite. And it's cheaper than the mighty iPod.



MUVO

STREET PRICE £67 MANUFACTURER Creative Labs TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE www.europe.creative.com The MuVo is one of the smartest gadgets

we've seen. It comes in two parts, a USB key that plugs into any system running XP (without drivers), and a battery housing. Plug it into your PC and you can back up your documents. Drag a few MP3s onto the drive and when you snap the two halves together and plug in some headphones you've got one of the smallest MP3 players on the market.









DISC PAGES

- WORDS Paul Presley, Dave Woods and Will Porter
- **DISCS** Mark Eveleigh

HELP!

CD trouble? Don't worry - phone our helpline on **08700 711 482**. The line is open weekdays between 9.30am and 5pm, and Saturday from 10am to 2pm, or email pc_zone@interchange.co.uk BEFORE YOU DIAL... If you are calling the helpline:

- If possible, have your PC operating and near the phone when you call.
- If this is not possible, note down all relevant information - ie system type, soundcard, RAM and so on plus the nature of the fault.
- Have a pen and paper to hand, so you can jot down the relevant info.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

You need at least a PIII 600MHz or equivalent, with a GeForce 2MX 32Mb graphics card and 128Mb RAM (256Mb recommended for Windows XP users) to run the software on these discs.

DISCLAIMER

- This disc has been thoroughly tested at all stages of its production. However, it is always wise to use a virus checker on any software before running it.
- Dennis Publishing Limited cannot accept any responsibility for any loss, disruption or damage to your data or your computer system (including hardware) that may occur while using either the disc or programs and data on it.

CD2/DVD Pub: JoWooD Dev: Cauldron Reviewed: Issue130 (74%)



Sometimes bigger isn't always better.

This month's maybem starts off with Chaser, and an exclusive multiplayer demo of the challenging FPS that we reviewed a few issues back. What are you getting for your (no) money? An excellent taster of your common-or-garden deathmatch, as well as two Counter-Strike-a-like team missions. You already know the deal for the deathmatch, find weapons scattered over the maps (one a building site and the other some sort of missile base) and shoot seven shades of shit out of the opposition.

Shock Troops meanwhile, the team mission mode, sees you divided up into Lawbreakers and Government enforcers. On the building site map the government forces must retrieve a secret package and return it to their helicopter, while on the Final Strike map they must shutdown the firing system of the Lawbreakers' rocket. It might not have the class of our freebie giveaway Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory (which you'll find again on this month's DVD) but Chaser is still a good example of backto-basics, no-nonsense fragging

WALKTHROUGH →

HOW TO STOP THE LAUNCH OF A NUCLEAR MISSILE IN FOUR EASY STEPS



You and your gang of fellow Government **Enforcers have just** arrived to kick some Lawbreaker ass. Mean looking aren't they?



Battle your way through the ranks of the enemy towards the missile silo. The fate of the earth rests in vour hands so even old men with beards are fair game.



Tool up! Press B and buy yourself some hefty firepower. This section is strangely familiar, almost as if we've seen it somewhere else before.



There are two of these consoles you have to hack into, one at the top of the rocket and the other at its base. If you get both of them, you win and the world is saved.

TOCA RACE DRIVER

CD2/DVD Pub: Codemasters Dev: Codemasters Reviewed: Issue 128 (76%)

TOCA was a thoroughly decent driving game from the same stable as Colin McRae Rally but while racing against your PC might be fun, racing a real person and actually knowing that they're spitting bile at their monitors when you lap them for the second time is the primary reason that the Internet was invented.

This multiplayer demo of TOCA gives you three tracks and a surprisingly large number of cars to race around them. The tracks are taken from the DTM, V8 and Eurotour series and, as you can see from the screenshots, the graphics are nice and shiny.

We had a few problems with laggy servers when we went for a

FACE CLOTHING

online but once you find a decent one we reckon that you would be hard-pressed to find a better multiplayer racing experience.



Get yourself on a decent server...



...and TOCA multiplayer is a blast.

TAKE TWO



I WANT TO RIDE MY LIGHT CYCLE

The aim of this classic vehicle deathmatch is to steer your cycle so that your opponent will smash into the glowing trail sprouting from your rear. The green areas on the map speed your cycle up, and you can use the mouse to zoom the camera around so you can see where you're riding.



THE DISCS OF TRON

Choose your team and select your throwing disc. The aim is to either stove your opponent's brains out from about 200ft, or lob it at their feet and destroy the tiles they're standing on the only thing preventing them from tumbling to their death. Fast reactions are needed if you want to survive.

TRON

CD1/DVD Pub: Disney Interactive Dev: Monolith

If you've ever pondered what it's like to be stuck inside your own computer, trying to escape look no further. This demo will introduce you to the two subgames from *Tron*'s main FPS storyline. First you can battle your computer's protective programs on the world-famous Light-Cycles, fast and futuristic vehicles that emit a wall of light behind the bike. Trick your opponents into smashing into this barrier and you'll win. Play

either across a LAN (sorry, there's no online options), or against the game's lightning quick AI, and if you're finding it hard, build up a bit of experience with the inbuilt tutorial level. The other mini-game puts you in a futuristic deathmatch arena, where you have to destroy your opponents, not with rail-guns and rocket launchers, but with discs.



INDYCAR SERIES

CD2/DVD Pub: Codemasters **Dev:** Brain In A Jar **Reviewed:** Issue 132 (79%)

Formula One too slow for you? Got an aversion to right-turns? No worries, just swap Schumacher for Eddie Cheever Jr in this new, turbo-charged demo from Codemasters, developers of top drives, TOCA and Colin McRae Rally.

drives, TOCA and Colin McRae Rally.
You won't have to worry about tricky han car

hairpins or tight turns, in fact, you won't even need to turn right, just hurtle round the oval-shaped track at 220mph in one of the two cars supplied with this playable demo.

If you're not happy with the way they handle, you can mess around with your car's tire pressure and suspension levels, then get used to the extreme speeds

on the test circuit. When you reckon you're ready, lay down a few qualifying laps for the real thing before moving on and trying your leanings to the left against 23 opponents.

THE GREAT ESCAPE

CD1/DVD Pub: SCi Dev: Pivotal Games

Da-da-da-da-da. Da-da-da-da. Da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da. Ah, *The Great Escape*, the only respite from in-laws on Christmas Day and one of the finest films ever to feature Steve McQueen and a motorbike. Now, 40 years on, the game of the film is almost out and to celebrate you can try your hand at escapology across two maps from the full game, Struggle In The Mountains and On The Run.

In both levels, you have to complete a variety of objectives before the timer runs out and your cover is blown. Get ready to experience some of the classically nervewracking moments from the film and make sure you sneak quick peeks through



Play as the Cooler King.

keyholes before entering rooms and keep all suspicious activity to a minimum to avoid detection.

ONLINE ZONE

We've got a new online section in the mag and to celebrate we've got loads of online goodies for your playing pleasure. Check out page 100 for full details on everything we've featured



LIVE FOR SPEED

CD1/DVD Pub: www.liveforspeed.com **Dev:** Scawen Roberts, Eric Bailey and Victor van Vlaardingen **Reviewed:** Issue 132 (88%)

Wheels on fire, burning down this road... Not only a beautiful hymn but also a blueprint for life. It's certainly a cogent attitude for the makers of *Live For Speed*, one of the most realistic feeling racing games we've come across in years (and we've come across a few – our Kleenex bills run into the hundreds). The review on page 110 will give you all the details, while this demo gives you three cars to unlock, two tracks to race around and all the online racing fun you can handle.



PLUS... BATTLEFIELD 1942 MAPS (BAGHDAD DAWN, CORAL SEA MAP) INTERNATIONAL ONLINE SOCCER MOD FOR HALF-LIFE, PLAYABLE DEMOS OF NORTHLAND AND HEAVEN & HELL, AND THE LATEST PATCHES FOR BATTLEFIELD 1942, FREELANCER AND MORE...

ONLY AVAILABLE ON PC ZONE'S DVD EDITION. TO SUBSCRIBE TURN TO PAGE 89. FOR FULL CONTENTS SEE BACK OF THE BOX

DVD VIDEO

Exclusive footage from the EA games that are going to rock your bells over the next year, including...



The Return Of The King: Elvis rocks Middle-earth.

LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING **BATTLEFIELD 1942: SECRET WEAPONS OF WWII** THE SIMS 2

FIFA FOOTBALL 2004

NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND

HARRY POTTER: QUIDDITCH WORLD CUP





Paaaaarty like it's your birthday...

FIAL SELECTION

Everything you need and then some

There's some stuff that no self-respecting gamer should be without, and being the magazine that tries to give you everything, we realised it was our duty to stick it all in one place and make it available you every month.

The Essential Selection is just that, everything you need to make your gaming

life complete, and seeing as there's so much of it we decided to double the capacity of our DVD, leaving all the new stuff on one side, and everything that's essential in life on the other. If you think we've made a glaring omission anywhere, just email your essential suggestions to letters.pczone.co.uk

THE 10 BEST PLAYABLE DEMOS THAT WE'VE RUN OVER THE PAST YEAR. ALL OF THESE GAMES ARE TOP QUALITY AND IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR THE BEST GAMES TO BUY IN ANY GENRE YOU CAN'T GO WRONG WITH ANY OF THESE

SPLINTER CELL

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 4

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003 AGE OF MYTHOLOGY

NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2

SINGLE-PLAYER DEMO

VIETCONG

PRAETORIANS

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 2

TOCA RACE DRIVER

BLITZKRIEG

ESSENTIAL MODS

THE 10 BEST MODS, ALONG WITH A COUPLE OF FULL FREE STANDALONE GAMES BECAUSE WE'RE GOOD LIKE THAT

DAY OF DEFEAT 1.0 (HALF-LIFE) COUNTER-STRIKE V1.5 (HALF-LIFE)

ENEMY TERRITORY (STANDALONE)

AMERICA'S ARMY (STANDALONE)

DESERT COMBAT 0.38B (BATTLEFIELD 1942)

TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC (HALF-LIFE)

ROCKET ARENA UT (UNREAL TOURNAMENT)

NATURAL SELECTION 1.0 (HALE-LIFF)

JAILBREAK (QUAKE 3)

PAINKEEP ARENA BETA 3.0

PLUS

MOVIES

STAR WARS GALAXIES

SAVAGE **WORMS 3D**

HOMEWORLD 2

LINEAGE II **RAVEN SHIELD**

THE GREAT **ESCAPE**

ANARCHY ONLINE: SHADOWLANDS

CONFLICT **DESERT STORM I**

DEMOS

THE GREAT ESCAPE NORTHLAND

HEAVEN & HELL

CIVILIZATION III

FIRE CHIEF

WILL ROCK

(UPDATED)

SMASH UP

DERBY

ASER SQUAD NEMESIS

UPLINK WRAITH 3

ONLINE ZONE

(SEE PAGE 98)

DESERT COMBAT 0.38B (MOD)

EXPERIENCE WWII (MOD)

BAGHDAD DAWN MAP FOR BF 1942 (MAP)

CORAL SEA MAP FOR BF 1942 (MAP)

THE THIRD REICH (MOD)

LIVE FOR SPEED (DEMO)

INTERNATIONAL ONLINE SOCCER (DEMO)

TANELORN SOUNDPACK V0.75

WEENIE MOVIE

BATTLECRAFT 1942



Worldwide No.1 Graphics Card Manufacturer

Ultimate Frontier of Cooling & Silence



- Ultra Silence
- Ultra Cooling
- Ultra Slim
- -26db Fan Noise Lower
- -8°C Heat Less
- -Slim & Sleek Fan-sink Design
- Ultra Endurance Long Fan Endurance Guarantee

st figures are based on the comparison with NVIDIA original fan-sink.)



Noise (db) Level	Environment Description
90~100	Airport
80~90	Construction Site
70~80	Crowded Street
60~70	Meeting Room
50~60	Resident Area
30~50	Library
² 30	MSI TWIN FLOW™(26db)





- FX 5900/FX 5900 Value GPU ¥ 128MB/256MB DDR Support
- MSI Twin Flow^a Cooling System Support
 New Generation NVIDIA CineFX^a Engine 2.0
- Y New NVIDIA Intellisample* HCT Technology
 Cutting-edged NVIDIA UltraShadow Support
 Microsoft DirectX 9.0 Support





Where to buy

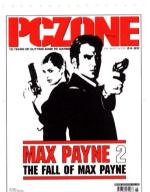
01923 896 996



JAILBOX

Everybody needs a good rant every now and again, and we're here to listen...

KEEPING IT REAL Dave Woods



COUNTER-WIFE

I'd like to thank everyone involved in making Counter-Strike - if it wasn't for this game I wouldn't have met my wife. To keep a long story short I was playing CS four years ago and was clocking up some major frags when someone popped up and asked if I would like to trail for their clan ([-OS-]). After a few weeks I passed my trail and became a member and found out the CL was a woman. After a few months I was invited to visit her on her birthday and fell in love with her straight away. (Luckily she felt the same way.) Months passed by and things were going well, so I popped the question and we got married two years ago. (By the way if any of you Counter-Strikers see us out there, say hi, I go by the CS name Immelman, my wife is Ckrats. Shane

You don't know how lucky you are. Chris Anderson met his fiancé in EverQuest but she turned out to be a hairy man. Oh, how we laughed...



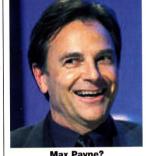
I'm in big trouble. I haven't quite started urinating in a bucket in the corner of the living room but I'm not far off. My wife has threatened to divorce me and my daughter is now called Davina LesserTwaddletosh and is a level 54 Enchantress. I've woken up begging the giant scarabs to stop eating me and now salute fellow beardy dwarves everywhere with a hearty 'Hail'. If you hadn't printed that article on EverQuest I would never have tried it. It's your fault. Entirely.

Customs & Excise would be better advised to stop EverQuest shipments and let the white powdery stuff through, coming off that is a lot easier.

Bigdavy In some circles it's called EverCrack. Surely that's clue enough.



EverQuest: it'll ruin your life if you're not careful



Max Payne?



Richard Hillman?

If we told you you were going to marry one of these characters vou'd run a mile.

GOT SOMETHING YOU NEED TO GET OFF YOUR CHEST? WRITE TO...

MAILBOX. PC ZONE. 30 CLEVELAND ST, LONDON W1T 4JD, OR EMAIL LETTERS@PCZONE.CO.UK

■ The Letter of the Month wins a spanking new soundcard courtesy of the lovely people at Creative Labs. The Audigy 2 Platinum has been firmly OUND ensconced in our Buyer's Guide since its release, and is the best gaming card you can currently buy.



BROOKER WATCH

After watching a cracking episode of 24 last Sunday on BBC3, I decided to get 40 winks and went to turn the telly off. Some tat called Pure 24 (basically a talk show about 24) came on, and I was on the point of switching it off when I heard the name Charlie Brooker. And there he was, the creator of Cruelty Zoo sitting next to David Shayler of all people. Can I ask why he appears on this weird show?

It's obvious isn't it? Writing for PC ZONE is a springboard to bigger and better things. If you're lucky. If not you'll end up on digital TV talking bollocks about a TV show. Charlie, we'll have you back if you're that desperate.

CS Mallon

MAX HILLMAN

Half-Life 2, Doom 3, UT 2004. Who actually gives a shit? Not when Richard Hillman, Corrie's very own murderer, faked his own death and is clearly masquerading as Max Payne, judging by your screenshots. Personally I can't wait for the level where Richard sneaks around a building site and uses the 'groundbreaking' spade-time to remove the rest of Gail's head to match her missing chin. And if

that spot doesn't win a soundcard, perhaps my porn name might: BigBoy Peacock.

James Brackley

And you know what? If you'd been the only person to spot the similarity you might have been in with a chance of winning the soundcard, but you weren't. Check out this month's Backchat for more Hillman spots.

SPEED FREAK

Have you heard of Live For Speed? It's a multiplayer racing game that's due for release in the next couple of weeks. The graphics are decent but the best part is the physics engine, which you can tune letting you drive any style you want. It's the best racing game I've played in a long time and I think it's worthy of a page or two in your mag. Check it out.

A Brown

Now you probably won't believe us but we're one step ahead of you. One of Paul Presley's missions when he joined the mag was to get Live For Speed in the mag and you can read the review on page 108 and try out the demo on our coverdiscs. With our new dedicated online section you can expect loads more of these little-known gems popping up, and if there's anything we're ignoring unnecessarily, email me at

"My wife has threatened to divorce me and my daughter is now called Davina LesserTwaddletosh"

BIGDAVY, EVERQUEST ADDICT

editor@pczone.co.uk and we'll pretend we knew all about it.

ADEPT

Last month you said that you wouldn't find an adaptor on sale in the UK that allows you to use PlayStation 2 gamepads on your PC. You lied – check out www.playerserver5.com, which is selling them for a measly £6.99. Just thought you might like to know.

Duncan

Cheers Dunc. We've just ordered a couple.

A few issues back we ran a piece on overclocking and although it was accompanied by a warning, some, including Brian Kirwan, didn't listen. His tale of woe was printed last month, and we felt so sorry for him we awarded him the Star Letter, an act which stuck in the craw of another of our readers...

HOOLIGAN

So, Brian Kirwan, you don't blame PC ZONE for acts that can only be attributed to vourself. like the wanton destruction of a computer that doesn't belong to you. That's really magnanimous of you. The fact that the computer in question belonged to your school does not change the fact that you vandalised property that was not yours! You decided to enter the bios without consent or permission and then overclocked the machine which resulted in the machine being damaged and un-usable. You. Brian, are an untrustworthy, irresponsible, hooligan who should not be let anywhere near an abacus let alone an expensive computer.

The reply that you received from the editor of PC ZONE was dripping in irony. The unfortunate thing is that anybody who is stupid enough to do something like this in the first place probably doesn't know how to spell irony let alone understand the subtle nuances behind. If PC ZONE wants to make you letter of the month and give you a soundcard then that is their decision, but there are more deserving letters...

Vincent Higgins

Like this one you mean?

Damn, we've already given the soundcard away this month.



Live For Speed: £12 gets you the full game from www.liveforspeed.com

LETTER OF THE MONTH

OFFLINE

The concept of MMORPGs (massively multiplayer online role-playing games) is fantastic but the reality, without fail, has disappointed. *Ultima Online, EverQuest, Anarchy Online, Neocron*, down to a man they're all populated by idiots running around shouting away in SMS text speak, PKs who have no interest in anything but slaughter (why not play an FPS?) and other idiots who do nothing but destroy the suspension of disbelief, and make it impossible to immerse yourself in the game. *Star Wars Galaxies* has the potential to be the best of the lot but I bet it'll be packed with 14-year old idiots running around like morons.

Is there a game out there that truly pays any attention to the 'RPG' part of that acronym? Banning PK isn't the way – it is perfectly possible to role-play a player-killer if done effectively but there doesn't seem to be any way to avoid the fact that those of us who genuinely want to role-play in these games are in a minority.

Chris Anderson, surely the true "beardy-weirdy" role-player at PC ZONE, seems to get great enjoyment out of his own online role-playing experiences, so what's he doing right and what am I doing wrong?

Robin Cannon

We reversed the charges to Norrath and asked Chris about your predicament. "It's an unfortunate fact that due to the mix of people you get in MMORPGs you are destined to run across more than your fair share of idiots, just as you do in the real world. I don't actually play for role-playing first and foremost, discovering stuff and advancing through the game with other people is the big attraction for me. If you're looking for a true role-playing experience you have two choices, join a role-playing guild or an RP server. The only game with a dedicated RP server I know of is *EverQuest* (Firiona Vie server) but there might be others.



The best massively multiplayer game or a kid's playground? Check out our review on page 102 for the verdict.

BACKCHAT

THE BEST OF THE CHAT FROM THE PCZONE FORUM THIS MONTH. GET INVOLVED AT WWW.PCZONE.CO.UK

We're quite partial to the name *PC ZONE*. It stands for everything that's good in the world of PC gaming and, let's face it, it's 100 times better than PC TitBiscuits, which probably exists somewhere in a parallel universe. Some of you are never happy though. Take **Amaechi** who conducted a straw poll entitled 'Renaming *PC ZONE*'. **Darth Morbus** rallied for us, roaring, "Why rename it? The name *PC ZONE* is good enough, and it's recognised and respected." Easy. **Csdaveuk** probably hit the money shot though... "Well... judging by the charts, the best name to pick would be: *The Sims: Zone*. That'd guarantee sales."

And if changing names wasn't enough, the rest of the forum was dominated by the changing face of Max Payne. In a thread entitled Max Hillman, our very own Pete Pointon was one of a few readers who noticed the similarity between the new-look Max Payne and Coronation Street's madboy, Richard Hillman. "Is it my imagination or does the new model for Max Payne look a lot like Richard Hillman, the serial killer from Coronation Street? Does this herald a new era in Paynedom, which involves hitting old ladies on the head, attempting to drown a wife who looks exactly like a prehistoric turtle and then going into the local pub to listen to strained comedy routines that would have embarrassed sitcom writers back in the '50s? I expect so." "Erm, so why does Max Payne look different from the first game?" asked Ruined. Check out our news update on page 21 for the definitive answer.

And from changing faces we move swiftly to changing jobs. Steve Hill makes enough money writing for us to live a life of luxury for the rest of his days but it seems he's not content. **PlumpOrgan** spotted him first. "I saw a film



called Rose Red on Sky last night and I swear Blind Steve Hill had one of the lead roles." Ruined also rumbled him: "Ah but Steve Hill is also Premiership referee, Mark Halsey! You look next time, they're the same." And we thought he was watching Chester City every Saturday afternoon. It sounded implausible...

Go on Hill, send the



THE A-TEAM

What's going on with your A-List? I can't believe you've put Medal Of Honor above Unreal II. MOH has poorer graphics, badly modeled vehicles, unbalanced game levels and poorer Al. The much vaunted beach landing took three goes to complete but compared to setting fire to enemies in Unreal II, it's boring. I never knew setting fire to people could be such fun. Please set the chart to rights or I may have to come round with the incendiary shotgun.

Roy MacDonald

See! We knew there were some *Unreal II* fans out there. We took the decision to move

the game down because, good as it is, it's short and as it's only single-player it doesn't provide the same longevity as the others.



Fire! Fire! Fire!

THE PCZONE A-LIST

■ SHOOTERS

STRATEGY >

MEDAL OF HONOR



MEDAL OF HONOR

They say the line between films and games is blurring, and after you've clawed your way through the maelstrom of the Omaha beach landings here, you'll have forgotten on which side vou're standing. It may not be the best looking shooter around, but for sheer immersion and intensity you can't beat the brilliant level design, the challenging AI, the lavish period detail, and those beautifully scripted set-pieces. **PUB** EA **DEV** 2015

PCZ ISSUE 112

MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR



A sequel to the stunning Shogun: Total War (now available on budget), Medieval offers everything its predecessor did and a whole lot more. Adding to the massive 3D battles and turn-based Riskstyle strategy map are a multitude of new options. both diplomatic and military Breathtaking in every way, strategy games just don't come any better than this. PUB Activision

PCZ ISSUE 120

DFV Creative Assembly

NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2

Style, stealth and magnificent set-pieces are the order of the day in this excellent spy sequel. It looks brilliant, it's well designed and genuinely funny - and it doesn't treat you like an idiot.

PUB Black Label Games DEV Monolith



HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS

Unchallenged for three years, Half-Life redefined its genre with a cracking atmosphere and a compelling plot. It now comes bundled with the excellent Opposing Force add-on pack and the world's favourite mod, Counter-Strike. PUB Vivendi DEV Valve Software



In terms of visuals, this is the absolute pinnacle in the world of the FPS. What's more, the arsenal of weaponry at your disposal is imaginative and satisfying to wield, while the sound effects, music and voice acting all exude quality too. PCZ ISSUE 126 PUB Atari DEV Legend Entertainment



UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003

Not a million miles away from the last UT title, UT2003 does however make leaps and bounds graphically. With finely balanced weapons, smart bots and diverse maps it's the reigning king of speed fragging. PCZ ISSUE 122 PUB Atari DEV Digital Extremes



From the makers of Hidden & Dangerous and just as compelling, this game borrows from every great gangster film ever made. Tense missions, superb atmosphere and great AI - it's a classic in every respect. Badabing! PUB Take 2 DEV Illusion



JEDI KNIGHT II: JEDI OUTCAST

The first Star Wars game to be awarded a PC ZONE Classic award since the original Jedi Knight back in 1997. This is more than just a simple FPS, it's frustrating, rewarding and extremely good fun. A new hope has come. PCZ ISSUE 115 PUB Activision DEV Raven



SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II

The bloodiest game in the world is back, but this time there's a brilliant game cowering beneath the carnage. Sublime Al is the chief culprit and if you can stomach the violence this is a must buy.

PUB Activision DEV Raven

PCZ ISSUE 118



ALIENS VS PREDATOR 2

If we rated games on atmosphere and tension AvP2 would've been the highest-scoring game ever. The multiplayer game and 3D engine brought the score down, but for scares nothing can touch this three-way fragfest. PCZ ISSUE 110 PUB Vivendi DEV Monolith



BATTLEFIELD 1942

Even though it features a disappointing and heavily bugged single-player campaign, Battlefield is one of the most compelling team-based multiplayer games ever. A must have for any online shooter fan.

PUB EA DEV Digital Illusions

PCZ ISSUE 121



RISE OF NATIONS

One of the most addictive and satisfying strategy games to land on our desks in ages. Its unique perspective, great gameplay and all round freshness make Rise Of Nations a title worthy of our prestigious Classic award.

PUB Microsoft DEV Big Huge Games

PCZ ISSUE 129



AGE OF MYTHOLOGY

The Age Of series goes 3D in Ensemble Studios' best strategy outing to date. Great gameplay, superb attention to detail throughout and a strong storyline give this an unparalleled sense of atmosphere, plus it includes a decent map editor. PUB Microsoft DEV Ensemble Studios PCZ ISSUE 123



WARRIOR KINGS: BATTLES

Warrior Kings was one of the most compelling and diverse RTS games we'd seen. This second chapter, which focuses around skirmish play, offers more units, varied tech trees and challenging Al generals.

PUB Empire Interactive DEV Black Cactus

PCZ ISSUE 128



COMMAND & CONQUER: GENERALS

The C&C series comes of age in this 3D orgy of scud missiles, daisy-cutter bombs and nuclear strikes. Generals is a superb looking game with well designed sides that offers fun in spades.

PUB FA DEV FA Pacific/Westwood

PCZ ISSUE 127



There have been a few imitators of the squad-based strategy of Commandos but none have come close to this sequel. If, like us, you loved the first game, you'll love this massive, preposterously detailed follow-up even more

PUB Eidos DEV Pvro Studio

PCZ ISSUE 108



WARCRAFT III

While not a huge departure from the original, Warcraft III is an extremely enjoyable and polished package. The storyline is brilliant and the multiplayer action dangerously addictive. Simple, solid entertainment.

PUB VU Games DEV Blizzard

PCZ ISSUE 119



COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS

There are 8,000 troops at your disposal in this historically accurate RTS. Smooth unit movement, a 3D landscape with real physics modelling and great graphics and sound make it truly absorbing. An essential purchase.

PUB CDV DEV GSC Gameworld

PCZ ISSUE 101



Z: STEEL SOLDIERS

Z will re-ignite your passion for strategy games with its fast-paced in-yer-face action that allows you to get down and dirty from the off. The Al is superb and, as it's entirely mouse-driven, it's simple and easy to get into.

PUB FON DEV Bitmap Brothers

PCZ ISSUE 101



ETHERLORDS

This unexpected gem might just be good enough to convert those who immediately associate 'turn-based' with the word 'geek'. The visuals and sound are stunning, the tactical variety truly staggering - fantastic stuff.

PUB JoWooD DEV Nival Interactive

PCZ ISSUE 112

Welcome to the PC ZONE A-List, the definitive buyer's guide for all discerning PC gamers. The games that grace these pages aren't just good, they're the best of the best in their respective genres, and our list is continually updated to show how each game stands in relation to its peers.

▼ ROLE-PLAYING GAMES



ACTION/ADVENTURE

DEUS EX



Warren Spector is one of the true visionaries of the computer game medium, and this is his magnum opus. Combining the finer elements of Half-Life, System Shock 2 and Thief, Deus Ex is an RPG of complex beauty and a true revolution in computer gaming. The fascinating sci-fi plot and amazing attention to detail combined with unparalleled player freedom are just some of the reasons why Deus Ex is a landmark in gaming. PUB Eidos DEV Ion Storm

PCZ ISSUE 93

SPLINTER CELL



At long last we've got a new king of the action adventures with the Tom Clancy influenced Splinter Cell, and a new crown prince of stealth in the form of the über flexible Sam Fisher. Splinter Cell features the perfect blend of action, structure and pace, combined with some of the best visuals and set pieces around. No self-respecting gamer should miss out on this.

PUB Ubi Soft **DEV** Ubi Soft Montreal

PCZ ISSUE 125



THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

One of the most impressive RPGs we've seen in years. A massively openended world full of beautiful visuals, superb depth of gameplay and innovative character development make this a classic that will keep you totally absorbed. PCZ ISSUE 117 PUB Ubi Soft DEV Bethesda Softworks



NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

The makers of the epic Baldur's Gate series prove they are still a leading force in the world of RPGs with this glorious hardcore 3D adventure. It features great single and multiplayer options, along with a very accessible toolkit.

PUB Atari DEV Bioware PCZ ISSUE 118



PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

An incredible game from Black Isle, using the Baldur's Gate engine. With a compelling story, well-scripted dialogue and the best character development we've seen in any game of its kind, this is a dark, adult scorcher of an RPG. PUB Interplay DEV Black Isle Studio



DUNGEON SIEGE

Graphically brilliant, massively enjoyable and highly immersive, Dungeon Siege is one of the best RPGs to date and only misses out on a Classic because of the shortcomings in the narrative.

PUB Microsoft DEV Gas Powered Games

PCZ ISSUE 115



SYSTEM SHOCK 2

Definitely one of the most original and disturbing games to hit the PC, System Shock 2 manages to successfully mix the genres of role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it with the lights off if you're hard enough. PCZ ISSUE 80

PUB EA DEV Irrational Games



BALDUR'S GATE II

The original Baldur's Gate was hailed as one of the best story-driven roleplaying games ever. The sequel isn't vastly different, but it's bigger, better and still extremely addictive. An essential for anyone interested in PC role-playing. PUB Interplay DEV Bioware PCZ ISSUE 96



DIVINE DIVINITY

This epic RPG contains the action of Diablo II combined with the storyline of the Baldur's Gate series, not to mention about 200 hours of gameplay in a huge fantasy world. The name may be a bit silly, but the gameplay certainly isn't. PCZ ISSUE 121

PUB CDV DEV Larian Studios



FREEDOM FORCE

Control your own group of superheroes in this immersive and fully destructible comic book world. It may not be the most sophisticated and beardy of RPGs, but Freedom Force is unadulterated bubble-gum fun at its best.

PUB EA DEV Irrational Games PCZ ISSUE 115



ARX FATALIS

This is a graphically beautifully role-playing game with more than a few hints of Ultima Underworld. Its hugely detailed and realistic environment made this a PC ZONE Essential.

PUB VIJ Games DEV Monolith

PCZ ISSUE 122



GRIM FANDANGO

If you've followed LucasArts from the early days of Monkey Island, Sam & Max and Day Of The Tentacle, this is a must. The scripting is impeccable, while sublime graphics and brilliant humour ensure it's top of its genre. PCZ ISSUE 71 PUB Activision DEV LucasArts



SILENT HILL 2: DIRECTOR'S CUT

Survival horror games have truly come of age with this superbly creepy and atmospheric offering from Japan. From the lovingly-smeared blood and grime to the terrifying use of ambient sound, it's a class act.

PLIR Konami DEV Konami



METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE

A convincing PC conversion that adds tankerloads of side-missions, training stages and unlockable characters to the PS2 original. There's too much waffle, but it's still an excellent third-person sneakfest. PUB Konami DEV Konami



SOUL REAVER 2

While this latest episode in the saga of Raziel takes few risks with the action/ adventure formula, it's a consummately constructed example of the genre, with a compelling storyline, satisfying combat and excellent puzzle dynamics. PCZ ISSUE 111 PUB Eidos DEV Crystal Dynamics



DISCWORLD NOIR

Although the point-and-click adventure game is dying, Discworld Noir is still very much alive. It's darker in style than previous Discworld games and all the better for it in our opinion.

PUB Atari DEV Perfect Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 79

PCZ ISSUE 126

PCZ ISSUE 127



Drawing on some brilliant raw material from John Carpenter's classic horror movie, this survival action horror picks up the story where the film left off. It's one of the best film spin-offs around, with tense atmosphere and good gameplay. PCZ ISSUE 121 PUB Black Label Games DEV Computer Artworks



PRISONER OF WAR

One of the most original games available with a light-hearted setting and an atmospheric soundtrack, which makes it more of an adventure than an action title. POW makes a refreshing change from the usual mass slaughter fare. PUB Codemasters DEV Wide Games PCZ ISSUE 121



HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN

The revamped Hitman engine is nothing short of breathtaking, blessing the sequel with gorgeous graphics that fit well with the refined controls and superbly realistic Al. Hitman 2 is solid and enjoyable with a great sense of gameplay freedom. PCZ ISSUE 121 PLIB Fidos DEV IO



SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS

Anyone who doesn't mind being splattered with the kind of gore rarely seen outside Soldier Of Fortune will find much to like in Severance. But it stands out from the usual hack 'n' slasher with its amazing engine and combo system. PUB Codemasters DEV Rebel Act Studios PCZ ISSUE 98

■ GOD GAMES



SPACE COMBAT

BLACK & WHITE



Although it had its critics we still stand by our original verdict. Peter Molyneux's vision is pure and the design of the game both breaks boundaries and serves as a blueprint for the future. The add-on Creature Isle is also available, which cuts down on micro-management and lets you quide your creature through a variety of mini-games. Overall we think it's pure genius in a box. PUB EA DEV Lionhead Studios PCZ ISSUE 100

CIVILIZATION III



Civilization III sticks to the same compulsive gameplay that made the first two games so popular. Die-hard Civ fans will relish the improved visuals and animation, while the new user-friendly interface makes the game accessible to the first-timer. Brings to mind the maxim 'if it ain't broke...'

PUB Atari DEV Firaxis Games

PCZ ISSUE 111

GHOST MASTER



Take your team of ghosts into the town of Gravenville and solve some otherworldly problems, scare a few mortals and bag yourself some new team mates in this innovative spook 'em up that's one of the freshest and funniest games we've seen for a long time.

PUB Empire Interactive DEV Sick Puppies

PCZ ISSUE 130

Revolutionary at birth, the concept has since been diluted through numerous add-ons and an unhealthily long stay in the charts. It's now little more than a cash cow for Electronic Arts, but you can't help but admire the strength of community and the fact that it's still selling by the bucketload.

PUB EA DEV Maxis/EA

CAESAR III

Starting from scratch, you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens by balancing their work, health and entertainment needs. So what? So it's probably one of the most utterly absorbing and addictive god sims in existence. Hail Caesar.

PUB VU Games DEV Impressions

PCZ ISSUE 70



EMPEROR: RISE OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

This intricate game comes from the same stable as Zeus and Caesar - and they know a thing or two about city building. There's a massive amount of gameplay and more than 50 missions spanning seven historical campaigns. As well as the economic considerations, you'll have to follow feng shui and the Chinese zodiac. PCZ ISSUE 121 PUB VU Games DEV Breakaway Games



ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 2

As utterly absorbing as its predecessor, RollerCoaster Tycoon 2 once again revolves around designing and managing your own theme park. This version also allows you to design individual rides as well as including a handful of real-life coasters. Detailed and addictive.

PLIB Atari DEV Chris Sawver

PCZ ISSUE 123



The latest outing of the best-selling city building sim goes 3D. Unfortunately there are no huge leaps forwards in gameplay, but there are plenty of features such as regional cities, imported characters from The Sims and a terrain editor to keep you occupied.

PUB EA DEV Maxis

PCZ ISSUE 125



MONOPOLY TYCOON

This mixture of the classic board game and a Theme Park/SimCity-style building sim is an admirable attempt at something a little different. Played in real-time, the aim is to make as much money as possible. Great fun for a while, but it quickly becomes repetitive.

PUB Atari DEV Deep Red

PCZ ISSUE 110



DUNGEON KEEPER 2

The ultimate 'it's good to be bad' game, Dungeon Keeper was a great idea and DK2 takes the essence and humour of the original, corrects all the mistakes, vastly improves the graphics, and adds a myriad of new features that build wisely on the original concept.

PUB EA DEV Bullfrog

PCZ ISSUE 79

FREELANCER



The first game in years to actually make an effort to refine the space simulation genre, even if it doesn't manage to radically re-shape it. Freelancer combines the epic open-endedness of the classic Elite world with the combat immediacy of the Wing Commander series. It also mixes in a well played out (if somewhat short) story and gorgeous graphics to create a thoroughly engaging and very atmospheric experience. PUB Microsoft DEV Digital Anvil

PCZ ISSUE 128

The spirit of Elite lives on in this massive trading epic, in which you must buy and fight your way back home to Earth. It rewards patience with variety and months of absorbing gameplay. Deeply hypnotic and beautiful rather than tense and frenetic. PCZ ISSUE 82 PUB THO DEV Egosoft



TERMINUS

Who says the days of bedroom programming are over? Terminus proves you can make a great game on your own if you have the talent and passion, and we reckon it just edges out the mighty FreeSpace 2.

PUB www.macgames.co.uk DEV Vicarious Visions

PCZ ISSUE 93



FREESPACE 2

Following in the footsteps of Wing Commander and X-Wing, FreeSpace 2 offers fast-paced dogfighting action all the way. With an epic story and amazing graphics, it suffers from being a bit short-lived if you don't play online.

PUB Interplay DEV Volition Inc.

PCZ ISSUE 84



EDGE OF CHAOS: INDEPENDENCE WAR 2

This title is likely to appeal more to the die-hard space simmers, but Edge of Chaos still goes some way towards advancing the genre. Its graphics and absorbing, freeform gameplay are inspirational.

PLIB Atari DEV Particle Systems

PCZ ISSUE 104

ONLINE RPGS

EVERQUEST



EverQuest keeps going from strength to strength and now has a total of four expansion packs. The latest, Planes Of Power provides a multitude of simplifications to help newcomers, while adding lots of new worlds for high-level characters to explore. It's a truly beautiful and captivating game that has claimed the souls and social lives of thousands of people the world over.

PUB Ubi Soft DEV Sony Online Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 117



EVE ONLINE

Eve Online is as beautiful as it is complex, oozing style from every pixel. Choose from four unique races, and explore the Eve universe with its unparalleled scope for adventure, interaction and trade.

PUB CDV DEV Reakktor

PCZ ISSUE 130



NEOCRON

It's a much smaller world than the epic EverQuest, but there's a lot crammed into this Matrix meets Blade Runner-style MMORPG. The atmosphere is fresh, exciting and extremely engrossing. We see big things ahead for Neocron. PCZ ISSUE 124 PUB CDV DEV Reakktor



ANARCHY ONLINE

A beautiful MMORPG with detailed environments and a huge selection of armour and weapons, which all add up to make an immersive title. Many of the bugs have been ironed out and the latest update offers a slick gaming experience. PCZ ISSUE 114 PUB Funcom DEV Funcom



One of the smoothest, most graphically lush MMORPGs around, ACII is also extremely easy to pick up. It's still in need of work but hopefully Turbine will be providing the community with regular updates.

PUB Microsoft DEV Turbine Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 126

IL-2: FORGOTTEN BATTLES



Much of what has been improved with this sequel to IL-2 Sturmovik has been done under the virtual bonnet of the game, IL-2: Forgotten Battles features improved AI, more accurate flight models and more of a realistic overall experience, plus more campaigns and even more planes. All of this adds up to make a truly exhilarating flying experience. Put simply, we think II -2: Forgotten Battles is one of the finest flight sims ever to grace our screens.

PUB Ubi Soft DEV 1C: Maddox Games PCZ ISSUE 128



MS FLIGHT SIM 2002

With more polish than previous versions, this professional edition offers players more planes, extra flight loggings and improved graphics. It might not be able to teach you how to fly, but it's the closest you'll get without paying for lessons. PUB Microsoft DEV BAO





BATTLE OF BRITAIN

Allow yourself to be immersed in one of the most exciting and realistic combat flight sims around. The action is non-stop, the skies are crowded and the flight models actually feel 'right'. Tally ho!

PUB Empire Interactive DEV Rowan Software

PCZ ISSUE 103



FALCON 4

We waited patiently for years for this title to arrive, and the good news is that, for once, we weren't disappointed. Falcon 4 features incredible 3D-accelerated graphics and a dynamic campaign structure.

PUB Atari DEV Microprose

PCZ ISSUE 72



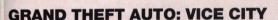
B-17: THE MIGHTY 8TH

B-17 reproduces the experience of piloting a World War II bomber. Just about everything is covered, from planning missions to dropping bombs. A must for WWII and realism freaks everywhere.

PUB Atari DEV Wayward Simulations

PCZ ISSUE 96

DRIVING GAMES





NEW ENTRY PS2 owners will finally stop gloating when they see Vice City's glorious PC incarnation. GTA III was an incredible crim-sim, so incredible that it was hard to see how it could be improved upon, but the freedom and variety of its follow-up is blinding. Whether it's exploring the sun-soaked city on a stolen motorbike, carrying out its remarkably inventive law-breaking missions or just shooting pedestrians, Vice City is about as close to gaming perfection as you can get. PUB Rockstar Games DEV Rockstar North



GRAND THEFT AUTO III

It may have been overshadowed by its younger brother, but Grand Theft Auto III remains as awesome as it ever was. It's a great spin on both the driving and shooting genres and you'll still love its noisy orgy of violence and speed.

PCZ ISSUE 117 PUB Rockstar Games DEV Rockstar North



COLIN MCRAE 3

NEW ENTRY Featuring some of the best handling we've ever seen, as well as an excellent new career mode, Colin McRae 3 is a must have racer. Driving conditions are realistic, the tracks are varied and the detail overwhelming. PCZ ISSUE 131

PUB Codemasters DEV Codemasters



GRAND PRIX 4

You won't find a more accurate racing sim. Graphically lush and full of anal detail, Geoff Crammond's latest effort offers in-depth telemetry and a staggering number of options. Grand Prix 4 is leading the grid in the world of racing sims

PCZ ISSUE 119 PLIR Atari DEV Simeray



TOCA RACE DRIVER

A storyline mode and one of the most realistic damage models we've ever seen are just some of the added knobs on this TOCA game. The huge selection of tracks and cars available makes for a superb driving experience.

PUB Codemasters DEV Codemasters

PCZ ISSUE 128

WILL PORTER, NEW ZONE

WHIPPING BOY AND PROVIDER OF

BEVERAGES, REVEALS THE DARK PATH THAT LED HIM TO OUR LAIR





EXILE (BBC MASTER)

This is the game that I blame for making me the man I am today. The expanse of cave networks was so huge, your foes so original and the wind and water physics so revolutionary that it ensured I would not have a girlfriend for another 10 years. It was also bastard difficult, so if anyone ever completed it I'll buy them a Mars Bar.



IMOGEN (BBC MICRO)

Imogen was perhaps the only game in history to encourage the killing of giant babies in strange ways. It was a unique puzzle/platform game where you played a wizard who could turn himself into a cat and a monkey. In a level called 'Hamster-Jam' you had to crush a hamster and plant a tulip bulb in his guts. Genius.



SKIRMISH (BBC MICRO) (AKA JOUST ON ATARI)

Whenever my brother and I weren't arguing and hitting each other with sticks we would play Skirmish. You controlled a tiny knight on a flying bird and, with skilful use of the 'flap' key, had to fly into your opponent with your lance above his. The resulting tension and enforced shoulder-to-shoulder proximity rarely had pretty results.



FRONTIER: ELITE 2 (PC)

One of the crowning achievements in my life as a nerd came in 1995, when I discovered a planet that had made precious gems illegal and would pay you to take them away. Elite itself was superb - the threat of the Thargoids still gives me the willies - but Elite 2 stole a large proportion of my adolescence and the thought of that day makes me feel all warm inside.



BLOOD (PC)

Because I like being contrary I'm going to stick Blood in my top ten. It may not have broken the mould too much, but the level design was out of this world. The flare gun, with its talent of immolating passing zombies, remains my favourite weapon in the history of the FPS. The fact that the enemies were a bunch of mental monks was also pretty cool.



FALLOUT 2 (PC)

I love the Fallout series because they managed to take the beard out of the RPG. No wizards, no bloody goblins: just f**king big guns and a storyline so good it makes your head bleed. The sex and drugs element was perhaps a factor in impressing my teenage self, but the sense of freedom the game afforded you was incredible.



CARMAGEDDON (PC)

I remember getting the Carmageddon demo off a PC ZONE cover-disc and practically wetting myself at the scope of the game. You could drive over, under and through whatever the hell you wanted and it felt good. I used to spend hours on that one level, just searching for ways to hurl myself a little higher into the stratosphere.



POWERSTONE (DREAMCAST)

Powerstone was a franchise that was destroyed by both the death of the Dreamcast and its truly rubbish sequel. Its demise is a crime, because it was the best two-player beat 'em up I have ever played. Jawdropping power-ups, countless weapons and claustrophobic fighting arenas all made for epic battles that could seriously damage friendships.



CRAZY TAXI (ARCADE)

When Crazy Taxi graced Warwick Students Union, my two mates and I pumped more money into it than we spent annually on kebabs. In fact, I can pretty much trace the origins of my ongoing financial crisis to the wonderful day that I first saw that beautiful machine. These days I can often be found playing it in HMV and amazing onlookers with my prowess.



What can I say? If I had to choose between Willow out of Buffy, dressed only in f**k-me boots and a 'come hither' smile, and JC Denton, I'm sorry to say that the Cyborg would get it every time. Even words like 'nanobot technology' get me all tingly. When Invisible War comes out I intend not to leave my house for weeks.



GAMES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

GRAND THEFT AUTO

More offensive than Bernard Manning, more anti-social than Liam Gallagher, more irresponsible than *Jackass*, *GTA* was a game very close to *Steve Hill*'s heart

'THE POLICE ARE ABOUT

TO HAVE A REAL BAD DAY.' Thus predicted the legend on the box of the 18certificate Grand Theft Auto, along with a Parental Advisory logo giving notice of 'EXPLICIT CONTENT'. It's safe to say that both warnings were on the money, much as it's also true that GTA really did change the world. In fact, if the hysterical reactionaries are to be believed, it is directly responsible for the breakdown of society. Arguably the most controversial game of all time, it was debated in Parliament, banned in Brazil, and spawned more tabloid headlines than a fight between Jordan and Posh. And all this for a top-down

According to Dave, that idea was eventually quashed in favour of somewhat less law-abiding behaviour.

"Basically, once we had everything up and running, nobody wanted to play the police. It just wasn't much fun as there wasn't a great deal to do. It then became a case of just adding and adding more and more things like stealing cars. And then an ambulance came when you ran somebody over – but wouldn't it be really cool if you actually stole the ambulance as well? So we did that sort of thing. Obviously, once the police start chasing you, it's only going to be fun for about five minutes so









that was little more than a glorified version of *Pacman*.

Eh? Not our analysis, but that of *GTA* creator Dave Jones: "All the pedestrians were the dots, you were going round knocking all the dots over, getting points, and the police cars were the ghosts. So really, the fundamentals of the core game, basically, are *Pacman*."

An interesting correlation, except Pacman didn't reward you for stealing cars, crushing innocent people and shooting policemen – all features incorporated during the development of the game, which surprisingly took the best part of four years.

As Dave explains, "Initially I wanted to try and create a city that was as life-like as possible. Cars would drive around, traffic lights would work. If you ran somebody over an ambulance would come and take them away. If you set fire to a car someone would come and put the fire out. So that was the basis – we thought it would be very cool if we could actually create a real breathing city, and that was the whole initial drive. And then we thought about what we could do in this city, and that's when the weird and crazy ideas came out."

NAME GAME

One such idea that was in place for almost the first year of development was the option to play as the police. In fact, the original title was *Race 'n' Chase*, not a name that readily lends itself to a game that sold upwards of two million copies.

we needed a way to make them stop chasing. So we introduced the spray shops. It really was an evolutionary process."

That process came to a head in 1997, when the game was finally released. With new-fangled 3D games very much at the forefront, the initial response to a quirky-looking top-down affair was lukewarm to say the least. Enter PR guru Max Clifford, a mention in Parliament, and a series of events that ultimately led to one of the biggest-selling game brands of all time.

LIFE OF BRIAN

Working at DMA Design at the time was Brian Baglow, occupying a fairly broad role that included some PR duties. He takes up the story.

"Somebody had drawn it to the attention of Lord Campbell of Croy. What happened was he raised the question in the House of Lords – which was a bit irrelevant and completely pointless – but it suddenly got out there. And then Nigel Griffiths, who I think was the junior minister or shadow minister for Trade and Industry or something at this point got involved. He jumped in with: 'It's outrageous and shocking and shouldn't be allowed!', again from a completely uninformed point of view. But that's what really sparked it off.

From there we had everyone from the Police Chief Federation through to RoSPA, the road safety people, complaining that the game was irresponsible. The only people we didn't have any complaints from were the Hare



GAME Grand Theft Auto
DEVELOPER DMA/Rockstar North

RELEASED 1997

INFLUENCED The effect of *GTA* can't be underestimated, and it has clearly inspired games as diverse as *Mafia* and *Starsky & Hutch*, and the forthcoming *True Crime: Streets Of LA*. It has also infringed on a few other genres, with even *Tony Hawk's Underground* sporting cariacking.

PROFILE

The top cheese at Dundee's DMA Design back in the day, Dave Jones, is widely credited with being the man who invented GTA. He left during the development of GTA III and is now managing director of Realtime Worlds, who are at the early concept stage of a massively multiplayer online game that may well involve driving. Fellow Scot Brian Baglow had a fairly loose remit on GTA, contributing in a variety of areas. Lured by the dark side, he has held a number of PR positions and recently formed his own company, Indoctrimat PR.



NAME Dave Jones
ROLE ON GTA Creative Director
NOW WORKING ON Secret new
game at Realtime Worlds
INFLUENCES Pacman



NAME Brian Baglow
ROLE ON GTA Writer/Lyricist/PR
NOW WORKING ON PR with
Indoctrimat, including
Realtime Worlds

INFLUENCES "Foul and abusive language"



Criminal computer game that glorifies hit and run thugs

THE computer genius who developed the best-sellingLemmings was at the centre of a storm last was at the centre of a storm last night over a new game which encourages players to steal cars and knock down pedestrians in a hit-and-run joyride.

Road safety experts, consumer groups and politicians called for a ban on the new Grand Theft Auto game created by David Jones's company DMA Design in Dundee.

Mr Jones stand to make at least £500,000 a year from the game which he admitted has 'lots of '"sleave."

It is understood the F

BAN CRIMINA ne admitted has 'lots of 'lots' ti sunderstood the Form of Film Classification with the new game but relented and awarded 'Irreposition with the carte, forbidding its sale (CW Jones 12th 198).

But road safety expert only promote car cr impressionable young want it banned from sh

want it banned from sh Players start off as pe and work their way up ladder by behaving, in DMA's own publicity, ir ant manner layer-ing the best can and k the most pe estrians Scotland yest erday led

the game to be banned. Road safety officer Neil Greig said: 'It can only encourage young people to replicate this crazy behaviour. This is an irresponsible area for games companies to be targeting.'

A spokesman for the Scottish Motor Trade Association said: 'It is deplorable to open young minds to car crime in this way.'

Scottish Nationalist MP Roseanna Cunningham said: 'This is totally irresponsible. I can understand the

Don't blame us



of the criminal hierarchy by steal-cars and shooting cops.

Is is the sick plot of a new computer
which will be on sale by Christmas.
to policemen and a Government
dog committee want it banned.
game Grand Theft Auto has been given
nating by makers.
Jaley drives through busy city streets
and cars and is awarded points for shootwen members of By SEAN O'BRIEN

members of oblic.

upose is to wreak upose is to wreak upose is to wreak upose is to wreak the seeing how much san cause before the up with them. It is are told they are if for gangland at they have seven to complete with the upose it is to the upose it is the upose it is to the upose it is the upose it i

VIDEO

YOUNG thug works his way to the of the criminal hierarchy by steal-

By SEAN O'BRIEN

Was before

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"It's entirely the wrong

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home computer PC format at the end of this month at an on kids favourite Sony Solution format in time Sony Solution for Christmas. You for Christmas are worted had the game will be played had the game will be played by children despite the fating.

Aspokespreson for family and Youth Concern said: "Parents should refuse to buy it for their children.

Dangerous

"But even that may not be the solution, because children will still get their chands on a copy.

This kind of material is adapterous and will make dangerous and will make the cool cars and kill." But the cool cars and kill. But the cool cars and kill." But the cool cars and kill." But the cool cars and kill." But the cool cars and kill. But the cool cars and kill. But the cool cars and kill

thave done everyth their power to mak Grand Theft Au played and they point to research to the their power to their power to the their power to their power to the their power to their power to the their p

"There is no good ovidence to suggest adults bedence to suggest adults become more aggress or a co
copy what they see, as
but added. "Some rasearch does indicate that
children below the age of
ten do, in the short term at
teast, limitate what they see
on the acreen."

The ace publicist Max Clifford

wheeled in to create a row ov Theft Auto. But isn't it all too C

MIKE ANDERIESZ





MANAGERS of some of Britain's biggest high street stores are risking fines of up to 55,000 or a six-month prison sentence by illegally selling sentence by illegally selling adult-rated computer games to children as young as 11, write Faul Nuki and Edin Hamzic.

A Sunday Times investigation has revealed that saferguards instigated by store productions, HMV, Tower Records, the Electron-Local Control of the safery of the







Now you really didn't want to do that.

Krishnas, who probably had more reason to complain than almost anyone else."

Indeed they did, considering that slewing through a crowd of them in a fastmoving vehicle gave the player extra points, and resulted in some very dead (or at least reincarnated) Krishnas.

> This kind of content fuelled the controversy, helped inestimably by the



appointment of one of PR's best-known figures, tabloidmanipulating spin-meister, Max Clifford.

READ ALL ABOUT IT

As Baglow recalls, "BMG Interactive, who was the publisher at the time, brought in Max Clifford, which from my point of view was great. My first ever PR job and I'm working with The Master, and I mean that in a Dr Who kind of way. It was great, I had my own page in the News Of The World that had a headline like 'SICK CAR CRIME GAME BOSS IN TOT SLASH SHOCK'. My parents seriously wanted to sue. What happened was that they turned a real-life incident into a news story. I

crashed my one litre Metro after hitting a patch of black ice and kind of hit a tree, and that was it. My Metro turned into 'a high-powered XR2i' and 'I hit a bit of black ice and smacked into a tree damaging the car' turned into "It's lucky I wasn't on drugs!" sneered Baglow.'

From a PR point of view, Baglow was naturally more than happy to feature in such a story, and indeed played no little part in its appearance. As he now admits,

may have tipped the paper

was they were looking for

but nobody was willing to

above the parapet. Dave

[Jones] wasn't interested,

and they eventually came

'Yeah, whatever - I wrote the

whole game, fine.' As a little insight into

how the tabloids work it was illuminating."

to me, and I just went

off, I'm not at liberty to comment." (He

nods vigorously.) "What happened

somebody on the team that had

been involved in an accident.

stand up and stick their head

"It's entirely possible that somebody



Top-down roadkill shocked the world.

Clifford certainly earned his corn, and as Dave Jones says, "He was great, the publicity we got from that was absolutely tremendous.'

PACMAN TO PAXMAN

Further free advertising rapidly followed, with the game's detractors inadvertently helping to bring it to the masses. As Baglow recalls, "The marketing director of BMG ended up going on Newsnight and

"I know," says Jones. "To be honest, a lot of people actually when they heard about it said: 'That's terrible and disgusting.' When they saw it they were like: 'Oh what's all the fuss about?'

It's a sentiment echoed by Baglow, who says: "All the controversy was based on the initial premise. Everything that happened,



happened because people heard there was this game out there where you could shoot cops and run over people, and that was it. Immediately, it was 'Dear God! It should be banned! I can't allow this!' Not one person who criticised the game had ever played it."

debating this with Jeremy Paxman and a guy from the Christian

Families Coalition or something, which was scary in itself. Jeremy Paxman was brilliant, sitting there saying things like,

'Come on Mr Butler, you're not going to tell me that children play these games, surely?"

Jones also remembers the time fondly, citing "The best one was when it was on Breakfast TV for two hours. They were having a debate about it, showing it, viewers were phoning in."

And all this for a visually simplistic game that was scarcely above the level of a 2D cartoon.

MUSIC SOUNDS BETTER

This is probably just as well, as had the game's critics delved deeper they would have discovered something that may have sent them off the end of the outrage meter. What wasn't widely publicised at the time was the fact that the music in Grand Theft Auto contains some of the most disgusting and degrading lyrics ever committed to CD.

The man responsible? Brian Baglow, who remains resolutely proud of his contribution to musical posterity. Having previously written a few lyrics on a nonprofessional basis, Baglow was asked to come up with the words to a thinly-veiled AC/DC pastiche called 4 Letter Love, which still appears on his CV today. A sample lyric, Brian?

"Well, the chorus is 'Beat me, bite me, whip me, f*** me, come on wank me, now go down and suck me."

Charming. But as he says, "It was an 18-certificate game so we could get away with a fair amount. It was unique, there's not so many jobs where you can go into your work, come home and go: Well,

THE FUTURE

WHAT NOW FOR SICK CAR GAME?

Call us shrewd professionals with our fingers on the pulse of the industry, but we think the GTA series may still have some legs. Vice City has done massive business, arguably helping to kickstart the '80s renaissance that currently sees young girls parading round East London dressed like Bananarama.

As creator Dave Jones says, "It'll keep going on and on. Obviously, there's a lot more themes you can go through, you could do the '70s or even go further back if you wanted to."

PR guru Brian Baglow agrees: "I think GTA needs to be contemporary or slightly retro. It's stuff people remember, it's things people can identify with."

It's also all about getting out of your car and stoving someone's head in with a baseball bat while the sun comes up.



There should be plenty more GTA blood spilt yet...



That's the last chant for these Hare Krishnas

today I wrote the lyrics for an incredibly blasphemous, sacrilegious and generally filthy metal song."

Baglow also came up with *The Ballad of Chapped Lip Calquhoun* by Hank O'Malley (And The Alabama Bottle Boys) for the themed Country & Western station that you heard if you stole a pick-up truck. Other relevant stations with their own repertoire kicked in depending on the typical owner of the vehicle you took control of. It was a pioneering idea that pushed GTA beyond the realms of a game and into the arena of mainstream entertainment.

"Initially we wanted to make it like an audio feast," says Dave Jones. "In the first

one there was no licensed music, we did absolutely everything ourselves. We created our own songs, our own radio stations and we did everything from country and western to Jazz – a tremendous amount of tracks. The lyrics were absolutely brilliant. If you listen to them, everything relates to

the game, they told stories about the

game and everything in it. That's what I think was lost a little bit with *Vice City* having licensed tracks, but then, obviously, it made it even more mainstream."

HOUSE MUSIC

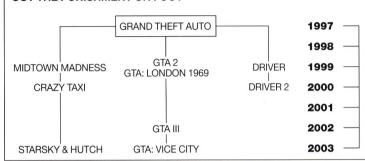
Despite all of GTA's music being recorded in-house – with Baglow making up fictional artist names such as Animal Testing Center and Government Listening Post – the quality was enough to convince experts

otherwise, particularly as the box boasted a '60 Minute soundtrack featuring all new music by some of today's hottest new acts.'

According to Baglow, "We had several magazines actually fully believing we had got all of these deeply underground bands in on the soundtrack, but it was all internal at DMA. There was a guy studying chemistry at Dundee University, this big black guy, Johnny – he did all the hip-hop stuff. Craig Connor, who wrote a lot of the tracks, is still at DMA, or Rockstar North. We got a local guy in to do the steel guitar and a couple of local drummers, but it was all done in-house."

WELCOME TO DA FAMILY TREE

IN THE YEARS SINCE GTA WAS RELEASED, NO DRIVING GAME HAS COME CLOSE TO REVELLING IN THE SHEER LAWLESSNESS OF IT ALL. NEITHER HAS ANYONE ELSE SUCCESSFULLY PULLED OFF THE TRICK OF BEING ABLE TO GET OUT OF YOUR CAR AND METE OUT THE PUNISHMENT ON FOOT



"There's not many jobs you can go home and say, 'Well, today I wrote an incredibly blasphemous metal song"

BRIAN BAGLOW WRITER/LYRICIST/PR, GTA

It's a ploy that's stood the test of time, and the soundtrack is highly listenable today. The game is also reasonably playable, although you can't help wishing it was in 3D, something that of course came true with *GTA III*. In between came the add-on, *London 1969*, and *GTA 2*.

IA2. o

couldn't really release it in 3D on PC and then 2D on PlayStation, it would have been a lot of work to do that. It was a question of getting the timing right and waiting for PS2. It was tricky – a lot of technical challenges. Running somebody over and seeing it top-down against seeing them in your windscreen, that was a big difference."

According to Dave Jones, "It was just an evolution of *GTA 1*. It all went a bit futuristic, which was a bit of a mistake, because the cars weren't quite as recognisable. But there was some nice stuff like three different gang types. If you beat up one of the gang types, you got favour with the other, things like that."

TAKE THAT

The leap to 3D was massive in every sense, but what is little known is that *GTA* 2 could have been the breakthrough title, were it not held back by Sony's console.

As Dave says, "The fact is we always had to do the game on PSone and there was no way it could be done. GTA 2 we actually had up and running in 3D but we

It's a difference that publisher Take 2 obviously appreciated. In fact, they liked it so much they bought the company, renaming it Rockstar North, at which point our man Jones departed. The rest, of course, is history, with *GTA III* proving a massive commercial and critical hit, selling millions worldwide, despite the dark satire on American consumerist society that it offered. Its sublime sequel *Vice City* upped the ante even further, offering '80s-themed shenanigans, and enough licensed music to spawn no less than eight soundtrack CDs.

A far cry from Sideways Hank O' Malley and his Alabama Bottle Boys. And a very long way from Pacman. ITE



A nice pincer movement there from the Old Bill.



Respray shops get the heat off you.



Explosive action from the game they all called GTA.

PCZ EPISODE 133: LUCASARTS STRIKES BACK

RETROZONE

YOUR REGULAR DOSE OF GAMING NOSTALGIA

"Atari designers spent just six weeks making the game"



@1982 ATARI

ET - The Extra-Terrestrial: the worst game ever made.

ET - THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL

The alien gets his just deserts

EVERY half-decent film gets a halfarsed game to promote it and most of us with some experience of such matters can usually predict that it is bound to be knob. You would've thought that after 20 years, and one of the biggest licensing cock-ups ever, that the games industry would have learnt its lesson. Er... nope.

Widely regarded as one of the worst games ever concocted, Atari's *ET* began life – as most film-licensed games do – in the mind of some executive as a seemingly foolproof way to make huge

amounts of cash. With millions of people watching the film worldwide, many of whom owned an Atari console themselves, the theory followed that millions would want to play the shrivelled alien. Unfortunately and for whatever reason, having spent US\$20 million on the license, Atari designers spent just six weeks making the game. Since there was no arcade game to base it on, nor much in the way of action that readily transferred itself into gameplay, it was fated to be an unplayable disaster.

The legend surrounding the game, that five million unsold (and apparently unsellable) ET cartridges – along with five million copies of Atari's version of Pac-Man – were buried in the desert, steamrollered and cemented over is, in fact, true. Or not, depending on whom you believe. What remains is the unalterable fact that Atari was doomed. Within a year, with their founder leaving and having almost brought the mighty Warner Company to its knees, gaming's 'Golden Age' was effectively over.

RETRO ZONE

NOVEMBER 1982

Richie Shoemaker, a man with more than a slight partiality to BMX bikes and lycra, hears '1982' mentioned and screams "Gizza job! I can do that!"



9924

Decent graphics.



8235

But it ended up buried in the desert.

THE BEST OF THE REST



ULTIMA I

(PC/Apple II/C64)
Some of you may be surprised to hear that PCs did exist back in the dawn of home computing, though they were slightly less powerful than one of today's espresso machines and the games were few and far between. Despite it being free of sound and bereft of colour (apart from dashes of pink and blue), Richard Garriot managed to craft an enjoyable Time Bandits-inspired sequel to his genre-defining RPG.



COSMIC CHASM

(Vectrex)

The Vectrex was a monochrome console with a built-in screen that was prone to burnout and, when compared to the ubiquitous Atari VCS, was prohibitively expensive. But to anyone who played one, the vector-drawn graphics were out of this world. Cosmic Chasm may not have been the best game on the system, but remains one of the most memorable for it's multilayered gameplay: part arcade shooter and part adventure.



RIVER RAID

(Atari VCS)

It wasn't Atari's best year, but there were a couple of good games, one of which was River Raid, notable for being the first vertically-scrolling shooter on the VCS. The game had you meandering above an increasingly knotted river, shooting down planes and bombing ships and bridges. It remains one of the console's best games and, dare I say it, more than playable today.



HUNGRY HORACE

(Spectrum)

The new Sinclair ZX Spectrum gets its first batch of games, all 16K of course, the best of which has to be the first of the *Horace* trilogy. It was a rather challenging rehash of *Pac-Man*, starring one of the most freakish characters ever to grace a computer screen. With his huge disproportionate and empty eye-sockets, lurching arms and strawberry-shaped torso, I'm not ashamed to admit he still haunts my dreams.

NEWS

GAMING NEWS FROM NOVEMBER 1982

- The first PC clone is announced. The Compaq Portable (which was anything but) claimed to offer 100 per cent compatibility with the IBM-PC even able to run MS-DOS. With a massive 128K RAM, a blistering 4.77MHz processor, floppy disc drive and 9in green screen monitor, you wouldn't have got much change from £2,000.
- Computer games turn children into mindless thieving zombies, so said the latest medical investigation from America into 'Technology Abuse'. "Hooked kids have a good chance of winding up as stunted adults," said the report. Hmmm.
- The Sinclair ZX81 was released in the USA as the Timex Sinclair 1000. The Spectrum (TS2068) followed in 1983.
- Atari released the 5200 games console. It wasn't very good.

GOD THEY CHANGED THEIR

THE GAMES THAT NEARLY GOT MADE

THE BRITISH EMPIRE HAS BEEN TAKEN OVER BY ALIENS... ONLY ONE MAN CAN BRING THEM DOWN "ONE'S GOING TO KICK ARSE AND EAT

> Spank muchos alien derrière in ten levels set across the entire planet, with more of the Duke's famous one-liners:

GRA

KENYA..

"Shake it baby... Er, you are a woman, aren't you?"



"Damn... This fuse box looks as if it was put in by an Indian."



AND THE HEART OF AUSTRALIA...

"Still throwing spears?



PLUS, ALL YOUR OLD FAVOURITES:

"You bloody silly fool!"

"Damn... British women can't cook"

"I was going to rip you a new one, but I thought I might catch some ghastly disease"

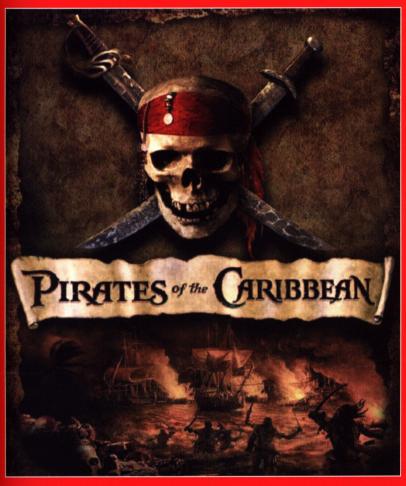
> "If a cricketer went to a school and battered a lot of people to death, would you ban cricket bats?"



He's the Duke Of Edinburgh and Baron Of Greenwich, but Phil 'Nukem' Battenburg is about to be crowned King of Carnage.

His new game, set some time in the 21st century. sees the Duke returning from offending the checkout girls at a Kwik-Save opening, only to find the British Empire has been overtaken by aliens enough to get his blue blood boiling. With another mess to clean up, and another foreign race to offend, the man with the gift of the gaffe sets off to spread umbrage through the former Commonwealth... and royally kick some ass.

HAIL TO THE QUEEN'S CONSORT, BABY.



Designed as a thrilling blend of role-playing and action Pirates of the Caribbean takes place during the golden age of piracy and high seas adventure. You will take command of a ship and its crew, swordfights, daring quests, dangers and riches follow. Through skill and daring, you will have the ability to obtain more power than the toughest captains in history ever dreamed possible.

Featuring advanced AI, incredibly detailed characters and vessels, breath taking views at sea, and lush, exotic environments.









PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN FOR PC AT VIRGIN MEGASTORES

- This voucher entitles the holder to £5 off Pirates Of The Caribbean for PC at Virgin Megastores
- Only one voucher may be redeemed per purchase.
- This voucher may not be exchanged in whole or in part for cash and cannot be used in conjunction with any other organizational voucher.
- The voucher is valid at any Virgin Megastore in the UK from 1 August 2003 until 30 October 2003.
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